the weekly Standard

DECEMBER 22, 2003 $3.95

Irving Kristol on Bob Bartley

Charles W. Colson on Carl Henry

Gephardt's Last Stand

David Tell on the showdown in Iowa

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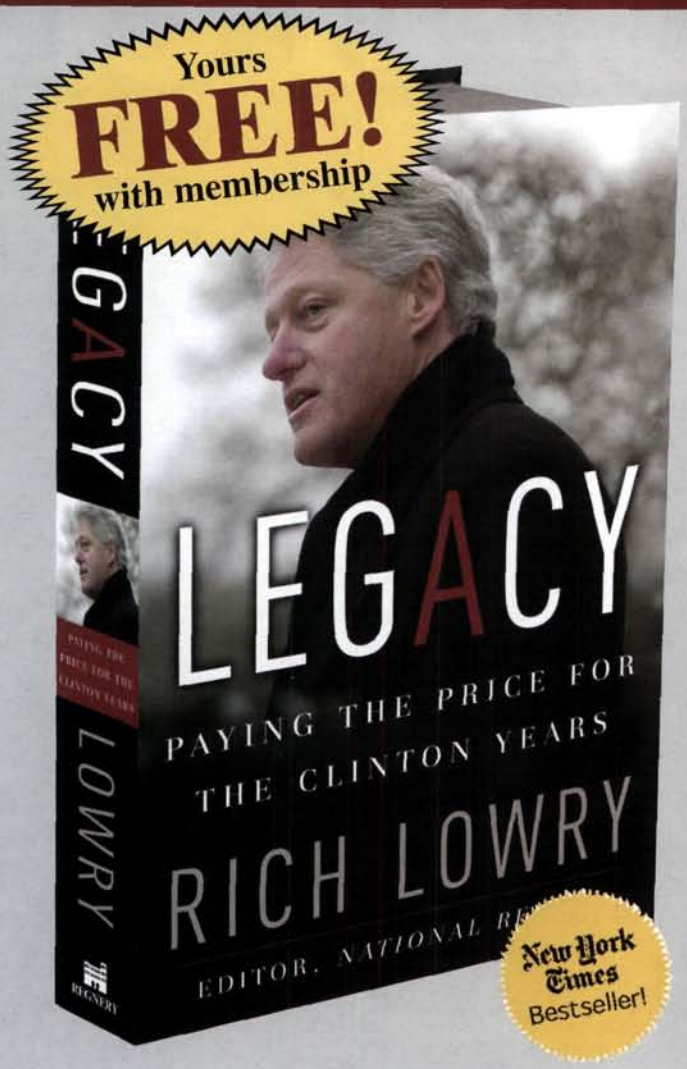
The True Clinton Legacy

A weakened, endangered nation let down by a failed President



Bill and Hillary Clinton don't want you to read this book. Slick Willie has spent virtually every waking moment since he left office defending his legacy and now Hillary plans to run for president on it. But, unfortunately for both Clintons, in ***Legacy, Paying the Price for the Clinton Years*** Rich Lowry exposes the Clinton legacy for what it is — spin, lies and failure.

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"A Great Day for Iraq"

This week we turn most of THE SCRAPBOOK over to Zeyad, the 24-year-old Iraqi dentist and blogger who scooped the world media with his one-man reporting and photography on the big anti-terror, pro-democracy march in Baghdad on December 10. It was, as Zeyad accurately put it, "a great day for Iraq." Unfortunately, unless you visited Zeyad's website (*http://healingiraq.blogspot.com*) or one of the many blogs that linked to it, you probably never heard about the demonstrations. We'll let Zeyad explain:

"Our people are for the reconstruction"

All photos courtesy of Zeyad at healingiraq.blogspot.com

"When we were marching on Dec. 10 I told Omar that maybe we didn't need to cover the protests after all since it looked like reporters from all the major media agencies were doing so. As you can see in my pictures there were scores of reporters and cameras all over the place. And since the rallies ended in front of the Palestine hotel we thought that it would be impossible for the media to ignore this event. I felt a bit awkward walking along reporters carrying just a little digital camera while they had all the equipment.

"The last thing we expected was to be the first to publish anything about the protests. It felt both good and awful at the same time. Good for scooping Reuters, AFP, AP, and other wire services and media stations. And awful for the people that depended on these services for their news. I'm telling you there were reporters from every station in the world at the demos that day and yet only a few mentioned them at all.

"NO to terrorism"

"Al Jazeera described the demonstrations as protests against 'what is called terrorism' and estimated the number of protesters as 10,000. AFP estimated the number as 200 at first (which made us furious) then later they gave the count as 4,000. While it was very obvious that the protesters were much more than 10,000. The Anti-terrorism Popular Committee stated that there were more than 20,000 demonstrators marching. . . .

A tribal leader

"To bribed Arab TV stations: Killing Iraqis and destroying their civil facilities is NOT resistance."

"Imagine if half or even a quarter of that number were demonstrating against the war or against the occupation. What do you think would have happened? Would the media ignore it?

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"The voice of that old Iraqi Communist shouting to the Arab reporter 'For once speak the truth' keeps resounding in my head.

"What the media also didn't mention was that there were other similar protests all over Iraq in Najaf, Karbala, Nasiriyah, Irbil, Suleimaniya, and even in Sunni cities such as Ramadi, Ba'quba, and Balad on the same day. And these won't be the last. There are many more larger protests planned for the near future.

"If the exact date and location of the protests were not so shrouded in secrecy I believe they would have been even larger. But look at it this way, the first demonstration on Nov. 28 was attended by several hundred people, on Dec. 5 more than a thousand, this time they were between 10,000 to 20,000. Iraqis are getting bolder. And despite the risk of being targeted we felt more safe than ever marching with the others. The IP [Iraqi police] did a great job of providing protection, and the Americans had two helicopters circling the area.

"It was wonderful watching Iraqis from different backgrounds, ethnicities, age groups, and political beliefs all marching for the same cause. Seeing Muslim clerics walking along Communists shouting 'No to terrorism, Yes to peace and democracy' was priceless."

Again, you can read Zeyad's full report and see all his pictures at *healingiraq.blogspot.com* ♦

O My Amerika!

The saintly and courageous Lutheran pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer was hanged by the Gestapo at the Flossenburg concentration camp on April 9, 1945—which is, we are informed, much the way those who oppose President Bush's actions are treated these days. The theologian George Hunsinger, for instance, announced on a panel about Bonhoeffer's thought at the American Academy of Religion this month that he is just like Bonhoeffer in his saintly and courageous opposition to Amerika. Indeed, Hunsinger—whose lonely moral stands have led to the torture of Princeton's appointing him the Hazel Thompson McCord Professor of Systematic Theology—explained that America is a "fascist state," and consequently, like Bonhoeffer, he declared, "I pray every day for the defeat of my country."

Hunsinger's relation to reality is a curious one. In the months before war in Iraq began, for instance, he took to the pages of *Christian Century* to deny that Saddam Hussein had actually gassed the Kurds or that Iraq had ever expelled the U.N.'s arms inspectors. But this claiming of the mantle of Bonhoeffer may be his furthest stretch into unreality. If there is anything more obscene than comparing America to the Third Reich, it is the self-congratulation of protesters comparing themselves to the Germans who opposed Nazism—where the personal risk was a little higher than the applause and promotion that America's self-righteous academics have had to suffer. ♦

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Casual

Crèche and Burn

In one Christmas memory of mine all the kids and parents are finishing dessert. I light a cigarette. A particularly outspoken relative, who's been bossing the conversation all night, says he's read that cigarette smoke can damage children's hearing. I reply, "No more than the voices of opinionated old men."

For the next four years, the blowhard refuses to attend any family function where I might make an appearance.

They don't make TV specials with scenes like the ones that fill my Christmas memories (or, to be fair, with characters like me).

How about this tableau? In the cozy, prosperous town of Douglaston, Queens, where I grew up, at the local bar one December night, I exchange greetings with an ex-con I used to play handball with, a drug dealer I knew at Catholic school, and a kid I've known for years who's now a cop. The three of them are hanging out together.

Later that night, I listen to this other guy I went to school with—not a dealer, an addict—rattle on about an idea he has for a screenplay. He's drunk, and taken with the notion that I am going to write the script for him. It's about some friends who win the lottery together but are torn apart—he says with much rueful head-shaking—by greed.

I have no experience writing screenplays, and tell him so several times, but he is undeterred, so I play along and try to hear more of the story.

"Who are these guys and how does their friendship break down?"

"You don't get it. They can't stay friends. Because of the money."

"Yeah, but do they disagree over how the money's divided? Does one of them try to steal money from the others?"

"I dunno," he says, irritated.

"Well, how do they go from being friends to not being friends?"

"The money, dude."

"But how does the story play out?"

"They're not playing. It's, like, real. That's what so messed up. You know, it's got to be like"—he puts his hand over his heart—"real."

I must seem disrespectful of my old classmate's storytelling skills, because minutes later he stands up and says (if I may paraphrase) that I am seriously lacking in Christmas spirit. A pretty frightening moment, because in my mind's eye, this guy has not grown at all since sixth grade, while my actual eyes tell me he's at least a foot taller. I escape a season's beating when our cop friend tells him to stop being a dumb drunk.

He sits down, takes a breath, and again tries to sell me on writing this great screenplay for him.

Memories like these may not be the stuff of a Hallmark Holiday Special, but there happens to be a Christmas song that captures their magic. I heard it for the first time last year, driving on the Long Island Expressway with my wife, the two of us having just lost so many hours to traffic that we were dangerously low on yuletide cheer.

"Merry Christmas," the singer cried in an injured sort of bellow, "I don't want to fight tonight."

The song is by Joey Ramone (the late, great leader of the punk band the Ramones), and it's my new favorite Christmas song, which I am grateful to have found.

Everyone should have a favorite Christmas song. Mine used to be "Christmas in Hollis" by Run DMC, even though, unlike the mom in the song, mine never cooks collard greens. And my hometown is nothing like Hollis, Queens. Very few people are robbed or killed in Douglaston (despite the criminal element at the local dive).

My friend Nick's favorite is Diana Krall's whispery "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas" (available only on import, sadly), which is like a late-night cognac by the fire, the room filling with thoughts, regrets, and memories of people who are no longer part of your life. Elegant but heartbroken; cool and perfect. A lot like Nick.

I also have loads of happy Christmas memories with appropriate musical accompaniment. The confetti showers of wrapping paper as I and my five siblings tore our way through Santa's gifts, Bing Crosby on the turntable. Those holy moments of standing at midnight mass, the delicate thrums of "Little Drummer Boy" in the air. That enchanting *A Charlie Brown Christmas*, with its lonely piano, as I and my two brothers watch from the couch in the old family house.

But I confess to a sinking nervousness at the promise of so much joy, a slight fear that the festivities will turn out, like so many past Christmas moments, badly; that the expectation of joy and fellowship will be followed, hard, by disappointment. But then I put Joey Ramone on the CD player and try to remember what's most important: the fact that I don't want to fight tonight.

David Skinner

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Correspondence

Memo Madness

In "About That Memo . . ." (Dec. 8), the editors ask why the Bush administration has ignored, even denied, the possible links between Saddam Hussein's Iraq and Osama bin Laden's al Qaeda. The short answer, I think, is timing. If you accept the premise that a politician's primary objective is to stay in office, then it is easy to see why revelation and substantiation of the links between Saddam and Osama, as well as the disclosure of Iraq's currently missing WMD stocks, would be better for the president if they were revealed closer to the 2004 presidential election. Assuming, of course, that there is evidence to present.

Gordon Kraus
Clarksville, TN

Sweetest Decline

Christopher Caldwell's "The Decline of France" (Dec. 8) gives an excellent analysis of contemporary France. However, in his summary of the activities of Tariq Ramadan, the Muslim intellectual and activist, Caldwell could have mentioned a term that French Muslims know well: *takiya*. It is explained in *Mes frères assassins: Comment j'ai infiltré une cellule d'Al-Qaïda* (2003) by Mohamed Sifaoui.

Takiya is the practice of saying one thing to non-Muslims and quite the opposite to Muslim audiences. When talking to the French press, you speak in a moderate tone and try to play down fears about radical Islam. On the other hand, when among Muslims, you would speak in a radical tone, and encourage all the behaviors whose existence you have publicly denied. It would not surprise if the smooth-talking Ramadan were a practitioner of *takiya*.

James Raymond
Las Vegas, NV

After reading Christopher Caldwell's impressive "The Decline of France," I find it very hard to imagine that France could *still* be declining. France reached its high point with the Norman invasion of England, and otherwise had a brief flare-up during the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century.

In the last 400 years, France barely escaped a catastrophic loss in the Thiry Years War by fortuitous political developments, and then proceeded to lose the Seven Years' War, the Napoleonic Wars (twice), the Mexican War, the Franco-Prussian War, the First World War, the Second World War, the war in Vietnam, and, finally, its 1956 war over the Suez Canal.

Sidney Brounstein
Redlands, CA

This is Not a Parody

I loved the parody on the new prescription drug card (Dec. 8), which arrived in my mailbox just a couple of days after a letter from the IRS that said the IRS was "pleased to inform" me that "the United States Congress has passed and President George W. Bush has signed into law the Jobs and Growth Tax Relief Reconciliation Act of 2003," and that I would soon receive a check for $400 per child.

I hadn't realized the IRS had feelings, but I'm certainly happy it is so pleased. I also had never before received an advance letter from the IRS telling me that I would be getting money in the near future. I'm also especially glad that the IRS went out of its way (and spent taxpayer dollars) to tell me who was responsible for the money that it would be so pleased to be sending me. And then I saw the Parody. Life imitating art?

Corey L. Gordon
Minneapolis, MN

Bottum's Up

I enjoyed J. Bottum's column on new books worth giving this Christmas (The Standard Reader, Dec. 8), though I do have some minor quibbles. For example, Thomas M. Disch's *Prisoner* novel was not the origin of the television series of the same name, but was instead a "tie-in" novel dealing with the characters and plot of Patrick McGoohan's cult TV series. It was published, as I understand, some years after the series first aired.

Also, somewhat to my chagrin, I must point out that it is certainly *not* true that no one has read a concordance straight through from beginning to end. I have done it twice myself. Of course, I must admit that it is probably not done that often . . .

Mark Owings
Baltimore, MD

War Games

As a retired army officer, I cannot agree more with Tom Donnelly and Vance Serchuk's misgivings, expressed in their "Preparing to Fight the Next War," about the direction of the Department of Defense's plans for military "transformation" (Dec. 1).

The "just-in-time" model of planning works okay for Wal-Mart. Wal-Mart knows with certainty where its stores are, has a pretty good idea about which products will be shipped, and waits to see when and how much to send. A military planner can't be certain of who, what, when, or even where.

The Department of Defense continues to look for false economies while spending billions to build two new generations of combat jets (the F-22 and the Joint Strike Fighter) and to operate a fleet larger than the rest of the world's navies *combined*. How will attack submarines help in the war on terror? What air force on the planet will be able to defeat our current fleets of F-15s, F-16s, and F/A-18s? At the same time, the Department of Defense seems to think that it is somehow too expensive to increase the number of infantry battalions in the force structure. I wonder about our priorities.

Gary Knight
Fort Leavenworth, KS

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Stop Dean

Al Gore's endorsement of Howard Dean was anything but polite. A more diplomatic politician would have praised Dean's major rivals for the Democratic presidential nomination—Dick Gephardt, Joe Lieberman, John Kerry, John Edwards, Wesley Clark—as esteemed colleagues and said they were all capable of being president (including one selected by Gore himself as his 2000 running mate). Instead the former vice president dismissed the whole bunch as "great candidates."

"Only one" candidate for the 2004 nomination, said Gore, had stepped forward as he had and come out early, loudly, and extravagantly against President Bush's decision to invade Iraq. "Our nation in its 200-year history has never made a worse foreign policy mistake," Gore said. And there was more. "We need to remake the Democratic party. We need to remake America."

Chances are, Gore's endorsement didn't sway many voters. But it did signify a pivotal moment for the Democratic party. The party has shifted. The antiwar, Bush-loathing, culturally liberal left now has the upper hand. Its dominance will likely culminate in Dean's nomination.

Many Democrats are terrified he will be the nominee. But they've been scared into silence by Dean's tough talk and momentum.

This is an event to be feared. Why? Because it will harm the Democratic party and lead to a general election campaign brimming with bitter assaults on the very idea of an assertive, morality-based American role in the world. And all this will play out as the war on terrorism, and the outcome in Iraq, hang in the balance. Gore's lurch to the left and Dean's likely nomination mean trouble.

Can Dean be stopped? A stop-Dean movement may appear quixotic, but it's not. Dean has no lock on Iowa, and a lead even as large as Dean's in New Hampshire is always precarious. Many Democrats are terrified that a nominee who vehemently opposes the war, likens the Bush administration to the Taliban, and plans to raise taxes on the middle class can't be elected. But they've been scared into silence by Dean's tough talk and momentum.

The worst offenders on this score are Dean's Democratic opponents. Dean is vulnerable on at least two issues, taxes and the war. But his rivals have confronted him effectively on neither. At the Democratic debate in New Hampshire last week, Kerry was asked by ABC's Ted Koppel why he hadn't raised his hand to show he thinks Dean could defeat Bush. What an opening! Kerry was free to insist, before the largest New Hampshire audience he'll ever have, that Bush would crucify Dean on the tax issue. But he lamely explained the reason he didn't raise his hand was his belief "in my vision for the country." Only when interviewed after the debate did Kerry attack Dean's tax hike proposal, declaring taxes the chief difference between himself and Dean. It was too late. No one was watching.

Lieberman and Gephardt, both backers of the war, have been no more aggressive in criticizing Dean on Iraq. Sure, they're wary of provoking boos and hisses from the Democratic activists who attend debates. But a plurality of Democratic voters in New Hampshire support the invasion of Iraq. Why not remind everyone that Dean would have left Saddam Hussein in power, with his mass graves, torture chambers, $25,000 stipends for families of Palestinian suicide bombers, ties to al Qaeda, and all?

Dean's foes have let him get away with insinuating that Bush may have been told about the 9/11 attacks beforehand by the Saudis. Dean raised this loony-left conspiracy theory during a radio interview on December 1 and called it "interesting." Kerry, Lieberman, Gephardt, and the others let it pass. On December 6 on *Fox News Sunday*, Dean was asked about the theory. He said he didn't personally believe it, "but we don't know and it'd be nice to know" if it's true. Again, not a word from his rivals. And last week, after Koppel questioned Dean about it in the New Hampshire debate, Dean's opponents said nothing.

Two other Democrats are threatened by Dean and Gore: Bill and Hillary Clinton. Dean would undo Clinton's previous shift of the party to the center. Gore would make the prowar position unacceptable for a Democrat in 2008, when he challenges Hillary for the presidential nomination. Bill Clinton has warned Democrats against becoming "more liberal" and Hillary has backed the Iraq invasion. For themselves and their party, and because others haven't the moxie to step forward, it's time for the Clintons to take on Dean.

—Fred Barnes

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the weekly Standard

Stand by Taiwan

It was a sad spectacle: Sitting next to Chinese premier Wen Jiabao, visiting emissary from the world's largest dictatorship, President Bush last week performed a kowtow that would have made Bill Clinton blush. Following a script dictated by Beijing, and translated into English by senior national security council official James Moriarty, the president condemned Taiwan's popularly elected president for certain unspecified "comments and actions" indicating a desire for Taiwan's independence. Moriarty then proceeded to tell reporters "on background" that what the president really meant was that he opposed Taiwan's plans to hold a referendum this coming March. The Chinese premier professed himself delighted by the administration's condemnation of Taiwan and opposition to a referendum, reminded everyone that China still reserves the right to use military force against Taiwan in the event of any "provocations," and traveled back to China gloating about the American president's gift to Beijing. Not so long ago, President Bush described China's heavily armed tyranny as a "strategic competitor" of the United States. Now the administration is soft as marshmallows, so eager to please that it endangers a democratic ally's fundamental security—and our own credibility and leadership in East Asia.

Last week's misstep on Taiwan is dangerous. Fortunately, there is time to undo much of the damage.

The facts in the Taiwan case are straightforward enough. Over the past few years, China has been building a vast arsenal of short-range ballistic missiles across the strait from Taiwan. At present some 496 of these missiles are ready to be launched at a moment's notice against the Taiwanese people. Chinese leaders, both military and "civilian," have repeatedly, and quite recently, warned that China is willing to use force if necessary to make Taiwan surrender its sovereignty and accept Beijing's rule. The Pentagon, both under this and the previous administration, has reported that Beijing's ability to launch a successful attack on Taiwan is increasing rapidly, while Taiwan's ability to defend itself is decreasing—and the ability of the United States effectively to intervene may be decreasing as well.

Now, in response to this alarming situation, Taiwan's President Chen is proposing to hold what he calls a "defensive referendum" in March on the question of Beijing's missiles. He is hoping, and with good reason, that the Taiwanese people will vote overwhelmingly to demand that China remove these missiles and commit to a peaceful resolution of the cross-straits issue. Chen's critics in the Bush National Security Council claim that Chen is playing politics with the issue in his reelection campaign. And indeed, Chen does hope that his public position regarding China's missile threat will serve him well in the March elections—a bit the way President Bush hopes his position regarding the war on terrorism will help him next November. In both cases, the point is that the two presidents expect to be rewarded politically for faithfully expressing the majority view in their countries. And in neither case does the fact that the policy is politically popular make it illegitimate.

The problem for Chen, however, is that the Chinese government has always hated the idea of a referendum in Taiwan—any referendum on any subject. For one thing, Beijing's dictators don't like expressions of democracy, either in territories they control, like Hong Kong, or in countries they want to control, like Taiwan. Beijing also fears that the more the Taiwanese people have a chance to express their views freely, the more likely that someday they will express the view that they want to be truly and officially independent. So China wants to squelch democratic expression in Taiwan as much as possible. And now, unbelievably, so do some senior officials in the Bush administration. In his background interviews with the press, Moriarty told reporters that the administration opposes any referendum on any topic. But Bush has never made such a statement, nor has any administration official in a public setting.

That is the silver lining in this otherwise dark cloud. Despite its disagreeable kowtow last week, the Bush administration can still maintain—and needs to insist—that it has not changed longstanding American policy toward Taiwan. After all, the president simply repeated old American warnings against Taiwan's changing the "status quo" regarding its sovereignty. But President Chen has made it abundantly clear that he has no intention of taking such steps. In his inaugural address in May 2000, President Chen declared

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that as long as China "has no intention to use military force against Taiwan, I pledge that during my term in office, I will not declare independence, I will not change the national title, I will not push for the inclusion of the so-called 'state-to-state' description in the Constitution, and I will not promote a referendum to change the status quo in regards to the question of independence or unification." President Chen is abiding by that pledge. His proposed referendum has nothing to do with the issue of independence. It therefore does not run afoul of President Bush's admonition.

So there is a way out of this mess. President Chen will officially announce that the subject of the March referendum will indeed be China's missiles and not independence. The Bush administration should then make it clear, publicly, that it has no objection to the Taiwanese people's exercising their democratic right to hold a referendum on such a question. It should at the same time make clear the American view that China has no right to undertake or threaten military action in response to the referendum, and the American commitment to respond appropriately if China engages in any such threats—that we would "do whatever it took" to defend the Taiwanese democracy, to quote the president from a couple of years ago.

This is the right course for two reasons: First, it honors rather than betrays President Bush's commitment to support democracy and democratic practices around the world. Second, it deters the Chinese from believing they can get away with military intimidation this coming spring or in the future. For that is the great risk that Moriarty's policy has created. If China believes the United States opposes Taiwan's referendum, then Beijing's leaders may also believe that Bush will stand by and do nothing if they threaten or take military action. Other nations in Asia—and around the world—are also watching. Does it increase confidence in U.S. strength and leadership if they see China succeeding in pushing the United States around because Beijing doesn't like a democratic referendum nearby?

We believe that in fact Bush will not stand by and let China fire missiles at or near Taiwan this spring. But the present policy risks encouraging such a miscalculation by Beijing, and thus makes a crisis more likely. To avert such a crisis, the president needs to revert to his core principles and make clear that the United States supports the Taiwanese democracy. Here, as so often, prudence and honor offer the same counsel.

—Robert Kagan and William Kristol

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Robert L. Bartley, 1937-2003

Remembering one of the most influential journalists of the 20th century. BY IRVING KRISTOL

BOB BARTLEY first entered my life in the late 1960s. He was then a young journalist on the editorial board of the *Wall Street Journal*, and he wanted to interview me about *The Public Interest*, of which he was, he said, an avid reader. I was amazed. The magazine, then edited by Daniel Bell and myself, had been founded in 1965, and by that time had perhaps a circulation of 2,000.

Bob may have been the only journalist in America who was a subscriber to this largely academic publication. And he really read it. He was interested in such writers as Daniel Patrick Moynihan, James Q. Wilson, Nathan Glazer, and Robert Nisbet, who were among our featured contributors to those early issues. Bob's article, when it appeared on the *Journal*'s editorial page, was entitled "Irving Kristol and Friends," and its point was that a new group of thinkers had emerged who were making an original contribution to American political thinking. The term "neoconservative" had not yet been invented. Had the prefix "neo" been available, most of our contributors (with the exception of Nisbet) could have been better described as "neo-liberal."

We were thrilled, of course, at such exposure, even recognition. The subscriptions rolled in—at least 20 of them, as I recall. But a friendship and an alliance had been formed. When a few years later Bob became editor of the *Journal* editorial page, I began contributing a monthly column, and continued doing so for almost 25 years. Only once, in all that time, did Bob propose an editorial change. Apparently my column suggested that President Nixon's state of mind, in the handling of Watergate, was less than rational. "Irving," Bob queried gently on the phone, "are you hinting that the president of the United States has gone bonkers?" I took thought and toned down the language a bit.

Wall Street Journal

Bob and I were allies in the debate on "supply-side" economics, having been converted by Bob's colleague, Jude Wanniski. The name "supply-side" was almost certainly a mistake. It took me a couple of years to figure out what it was, although Jude explained it patiently more than once. It would have helped if we had simply said that we were committed to the economics of growth instead of the economics of equilibrium and stability. The latter, of course, was (and to some degree still is) the economic theory of the bulk of American conservatism and of the Republican party, so the odds of winning that debate were close to nil.

But a political accident intervened. Jack Kemp, a congressman who had been campaigning in favor of "capital formation" as a cure for our economic ills, was persuaded by Jude and Bob that supply-side economics was a superior version of his theory. And Jack had the ear of an aspiring Republican presidential candidate named Ronald Reagan. Reagan agreed that the traditional Republican strategy of "saving the country from bankruptcy" by cutting spending—which no Republican administration had ever succeeded in doing—while leaving the programmatic initiatives in the hands of Democrats, was self-defeating. So Reagan became a convert to supply-side economics—for a while our only convert. But cutting tax rates turned out to be a highly popular idea. Thus the convert converted the nation.

Converting the Republican party to the new economics was Bartley's finest hour. It made the *Wall Street Journal* a politically influential newspaper, well beyond the confines of the business community. It is still the only paper of its kind in the world. Though Britain, France, Germany, Switzerland, et al., all have distinguished financial papers, none has ever had the influence of the *Journal*. Certainly none has ever dreamed of reshaping a major political party, as the *Journal* has done.

In the years that followed, Bartley began to focus on foreign policy and even on the "culture wars." I say "even" because Bob had, to begin with, a Midwesterner's suspicion of intellectual quarrels. Once, when my wife complained about a recent issue of the *New York Review of Books*, Bob expressed puzzlement that she bothered to read that publication. In due course, if he himself did not read it, he did come to appreciate that the culture represented by the *New York*

Irving Kristol, the author and essayist, was a longtime member of the Wall Street Journal*'s Board of Contributors.*

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Review had to be taken seriously, and he saw to it that the *Journal* did just that. And on foreign policy, Bob helped cure the Republican party of its isolationist virus, while maintaining a healthy contempt for the United Nations and its offshoots.

Bob Bartley was one of the most influential journalists of the 20th century. He was also a most admirable human being. Although his controversial opinions, strongly expressed, made him enemies, he himself had no enemies. Petty passions were simply foreign to him. Even his political opponents came to respect his intelligence, his integrity, and his great good nature. ♦

Who Harks to Harkin?

Will the Iowa senator make a difference in Iowa?

BY MATTHEW CONTINETTI

WHEN AL GORE endorsed Howard Dean for president last Tuesday, first in New York City and again in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, Tom Harkin, Iowa's four-term Democratic senator, was working in his office in Washington. He must have felt a little left out.

Harkin, you see, had made lots of noise about how *he* would be the Democratic kingmaker in next month's Iowa caucuses. Last May, Harkin organized the first of 10 "Hear it from the Heartland" forums, in which he introduced the various Democratic presidential candidates to Iowa caucus-goers. In September, he held his 26th annual "Harkin Steak Fry," renowned as the largest state-wide gathering of Iowa Democrats, in which he . . . well, reintroduced the candidates to Iowa caucus-goers. It was expected that, after all the introductions, Harkin would finally endorse the candidate he liked best, and back that candidate with his considerable political organization come January. That hasn't happened. Yet.

Would a Harkin endorsement even matter at this point? Peverill Squire, a political scientist at the University of Iowa, thinks so. "Harkin would be a major player if he decided to throw around his weight," he says, noting that the senator, who has been involved in Iowa politics for over 30 years, has contacts in each of Iowa's 99 counties, as well as strong ties to Iowa's powerful labor unions.

Those contacts have helped candidates before. One former Gore operative says Harkin's endorsement was central to the vice president's victory over Bill Bradley in the 2000 caucuses. (Gore thanked Harkin effusively in his Iowa victory speech.) And David Yepsen, the *Des Moines Register*'s chief political writer, says that Tom Vilsack, Iowa's governor since 1998 and the state's most popular Democrat, "owes the governorship to Harkin."

The senator's political and campaign operations, writes Michael Barone in the latest *Almanac of American Politics*, are second to none. Barone notes that during the 2002 Senate race, for example, Harkin "ran an effective, high-tech voter registration and turnout operation," which helped him win votes not only in his traditional urban base, but also in rural districts. "There's no other Democrat similarly positioned" to influence the caucuses, says Dennis Goldford, a professor at Drake University in Des Moines. "He's the only game in town statewide."

Harkin thinks so, too: "I'm now the nine-hundred-pound gorilla," he told political writer Walter Shapiro in February. "I have the best organization. I have the best [voter] list."

The presidential candidates seem to agree. Each participated eagerly in Harkin's candidate forums. Each courted the senator in different ways. Mainly, they showered him with compliments. "I have seen Tom on the floor of the U.S. Senate with a backbone of steel," John Edwards told one crowd of Iowa Democrats, "when it's just him and nobody else —no matter who he's fighting against." In September, at a "Hear it from the Heartland" forum, an audience member asked Joe Lieberman about his farm policy. "My farm policy begins right over there," Lieberman said, pointing to a beaming Harkin. (Harkin was an architect of the 2002 farm bill.)

When you watch the "Hear it from the Heartland" forums, it's easy to think that Harkin, not the featured candidate, is the one running for president. Take the Lieberman forum, for example, which you can find on C-SPAN's website. Harkin enters the meeting hall with Lieberman, accompanied by rock music. He shakes as many hands as the candidate. His name—not the candidate's—is plastered throughout the room in bold, blue letters. Eventually, he makes it to the stage, whereupon he says that he's here because, "I wanted to establish a series of forums and find out what's important to you."

But, instead, you find out what's important to Tom Harkin. Like the economy: "We now have the lowest numbers of manufacturing jobs in the United States since 1958, when I graduated from high school." And health care, a lack of which, Harkin tells the crowd, forced one woman he knows to "take out her tooth with a hammer and a screwdriver." You get the idea. Or maybe you don't, in

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which case Harkin is happy to sum up: President Bush and congressional Republicans "are gambling with your *lives*."

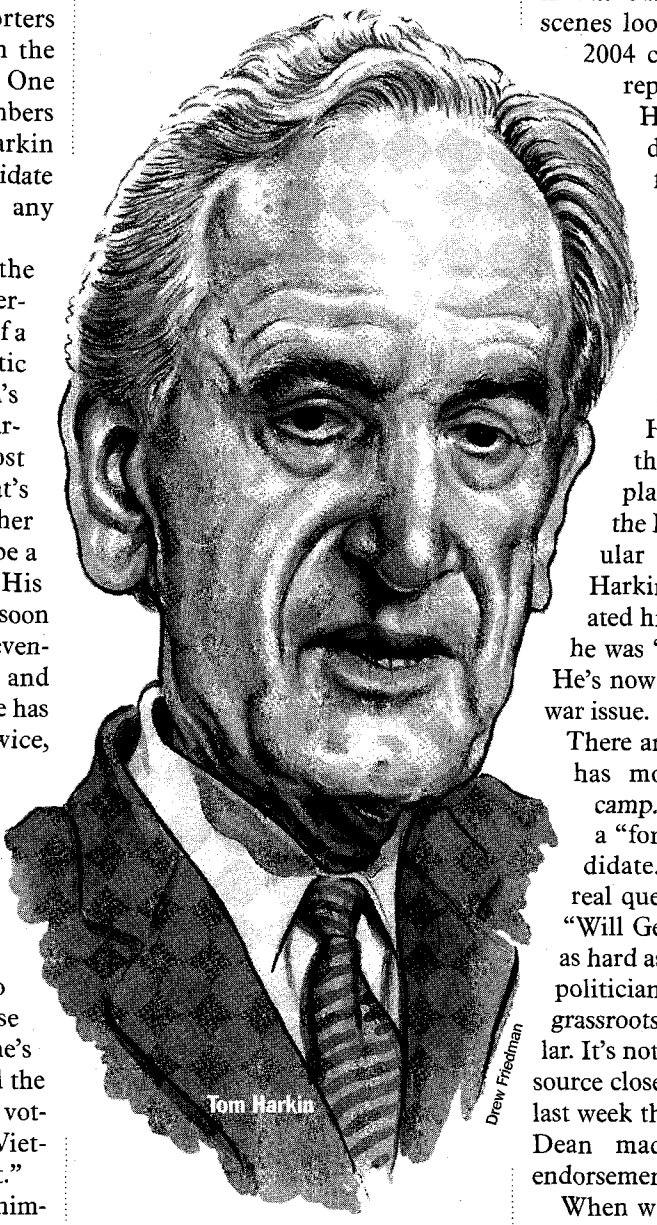
If the stakes are so high, why isn't Harkin running himself? He's done it before. In 1992, Harkin ran for the Democratic nomination as an unreconstructed liberal. His supporters wore T-shirts emblazoned with the logo "Give 'em hell Harkin." One observer of Iowa politics remembers that, in stump speeches, Harkin would say he was the only candidate who wouldn't put up with any "bulls—t" in Washington.

In 1992, Harkin dominated the Iowa caucuses, earning 76.5 percent of the vote. It wasn't much of a surprise. The other Democratic candidates figured that Harkin's "favorite son" status all but guaranteed his victory, and so most skipped Iowa that year. What's more, the other candidates further figured, Harkin's victory would be a Pyrrhic one. They were right. His candidacy lost steam and money soon after his Iowa triumph, and he eventually vanished from the polls, and then from the race. Since then, he has been reelected to the Senate twice, though never with more than 56 percent of the vote.

While in the Senate, he's spoken his mind on the issues, usually returning to his earthy obsessions: The first Gulf War, Harkin has said, "was like teenage sex. We got in too soon and out too soon"; the case for Bill Clinton's impeachment, he's argued, was "a pile of dung"; and the second Gulf War, which Harkin voted to authorize, "may not be Vietnam, but boy, it sure smells like it."

But, above all, Harkin prides himself on his power-brokering. "Every candidate that I have supported in Iowa," Harkin told Fox News last May, "has gone on to be the nominee of our party." It's true. In 1976, Harkin, then a first-term congressman, supported Jimmy Carter. In 1984, Harkin endorsed Mondale. (In 1988, Harkin declined to endorse a candidate.) And in 2000, Harkin chose Gore.

Who will he choose in 2004? "They're all good," he has said of the field. "I like them all. It's like anything else—there's not one of them I agree with 100 percent of the time, but there's none of them I disagree with 100 percent of the time."



Well, maybe. Harkin won't be endorsing Lieberman, though, nor, for that matter, retired General Wesley Clark, both of whom decided last fall to skip the caucuses. Harkin was peeved. "Quite frankly, they aren't going to win the nomination," he said shortly after the two candidates announced their decisions. "I'll make that blunt statement right now."

That leaves Dean, Dick Gephardt, and the two Johns, Kerry and Edwards—the four candidates that Harkin has said he thinks have a reasonable shot at the nomination. But in *One-Car Caravan*, his behind-the-scenes look at the first days of the 2004 campaign, Walter Shapiro reports that, talking with Harkin, "it was hard to detect much enthusiasm for Kerry or any sign that Edwards's efforts to ingratiate himself were bearing fruit."

Which leaves Dean and Gephardt. Gephardt, of course, won the caucuses in 1988, without Harkin's endorsement. But this year Gephardt has been plagued by his support for the Iraq war, a position unpopular with Iowa Democrats. Harkin, meanwhile, has repudiated his vote on Iraq, saying that he was "lied to" by the president. He's now in the Dean camp on the war issue.

There are other hints that Harkin has moved towards the Dean camp. He has said that Dean is a "formidable, formidable candidate." He tells reporters the real question of the campaign is, "Will Gephardt's supporters work as hard as Dean's people?" The two politicians' styles—rabble-rousing, grassroots populism—are also similar. It's not surprising, then, that one source close to Harkin told *CNN.com* last week that a Gore endorsement of Dean made it likely a Harkin endorsement would follow.

When will Harkin endorse a candidate? No one is sure. Harkin's aides say that while the senator doesn't plan to endorse at the moment, he hasn't ruled it out, either. Harkin could decide to stay neutral, of course, as he did in 1988. Longtime Harkin-watchers, however, think that's unlikely. When you're a 900-pound gorilla, after all, it's hard *not* to throw your weight around. ♦

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The Muddle of the Moderate Muslim

Khaled Abou El Fadl's mysterious Egyptian interview. BY KATHERINE MANGU-WARD

DR. KHALED ABOU EL FADL'S reputation as a moderate Muslim thinker earned him a seat on the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom last May. He is an accomplished legal scholar and an expert on Islamic jurisprudence. Born in Kuwait and bred in Egypt, Abou El Fadl is a professor at UCLA Law School with degrees from Yale, Princeton, and the University of Pennsylvania. Nevertheless, remarks made in an unguarded moment—and subsequently distorted by the Egyptian press—have just landed him in trouble.

On a trip to Cairo on behalf of the commission last month, Abou El Fadl met with the editor in chief of the government-controlled Egyptian weekly *October*. By his account, he was not well received. After a tense conversation with the editor, a photographer snapped his picture, and another man questioned him for a few minutes. "I should have asked him if this was an interview," Abou El Fadl concedes.

Shortly thereafter, what was presented as the transcript of an interview appeared in the magazine's pages. It was duly translated by the Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI) in Washington, which posted excerpts on its website. A small scandal erupted, as Abou El Fadl and the commission issued denunciations of *October*, claiming that the published text—highly critical of the Bush administration's Middle East policy and anxious about the dangers of a second Bush term—was composed of "distortions and fabrications."

Abou El Fadl wrote a refutation of the interview. Sure enough, some of the contents of *October*'s version defy credulity—the statement that U.S. soldiers in Iraq "were panic-stricken in their sleep and wet themselves," for example, or that Abou El Fadl threatened to "quit and go back to [his] academic post" if the White House ignored his advice. The interview has Abou El Fadl absurdly boasting of great influence on U.S. policy ("I even got to the point of determining the deployment plan of withdrawing from Iraq, [but the administration] hold[s] the same beliefs that accompanied colonialism's entrance to the Muslim countries in the 19th century") and has him stating he lives in Texas, which he does not. Given the low journalistic standards of the Egyptian press, it seems obvious that he has been wronged.

Nevertheless, other aspects of the controversy raise questions. Some passages of the interview, while inconsistent with Abou El Fadl's public persona as a pro-Western moderate, actually echo earlier statements of his. These deserve closer examination:

¶ Asked about the role of Islamic organizations in America, Abou El Fadl is quoted as saying: "Because of shortsightedness and ignorance, the Islamic organizations helped Bush reach the White House. . . . I met with many leaders of these organizations and I told them that I have known Bush well since he was governor of Texas, where I live, and I am familiar with his bad policy." Abou El Fadl writes in his rebuttal: "I never met with leaders of Arab

Katherine Mangu-Ward is a reporter at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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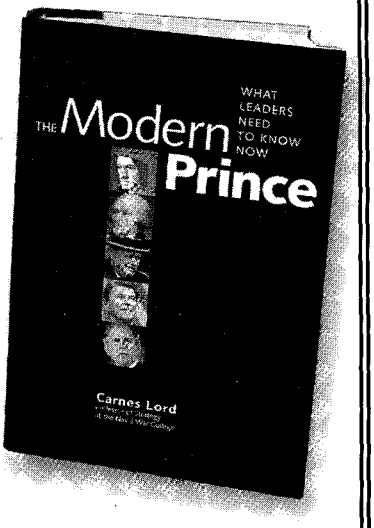
Carnes Lord



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organizations before or after President Bush's election. I do not have a relationship with the leaders of these organizations."

There is evidence, however, that Abou El Fadl has fairly cordial relations with Islamic organizations. They have published him—the monthly *Minaret*, for example, published by the Islamic Center of Southern California, carried his column for over 20 years (though they recently severed relations with him), and his work has been posted on the website of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR). In a long letter to CAIR dated July 20, 2002 (brought to the attention of THE WEEKLY STANDARD by Middle East scholar Daniel Pipes, a persistent critic of Abou El Fadl), Abou El Fadl writes, "CAIR is one of our very few shining examples [of Muslim leadership]." He signs the letter—which was part of a post-9/11 exchange triggered by an op-ed of his in the *Los Angeles Times*—"yours sincerely in brotherhood."

¶ *October* quotes Abou El Fadl condemning the president: "Bush permitted missionaries into Iraq before medicines." Abou El Fadl replies: "This is a complete fabrication. . . . To my knowledge, President Bush did not send Christian missionaries to Iraq."

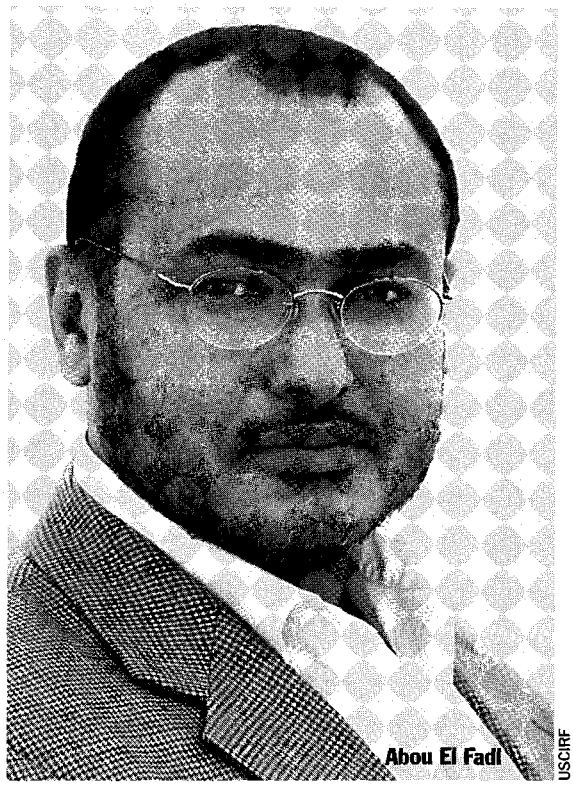
But he contradicts this assertion in an article he authored on April 27, 2003, in the *Boston Phoenix*, where he says that it was an "unfortunate decision by the Bush administration to allow Christian missionaries to enter Iraq in the company of American forces. This smacks of the conduct of colonial powers."

This is not an isolated comment. In the letter to CAIR—which is posted on Abou El Fadl's fan site—he writes: "I have been following the near evangelical fanaticism of our current administration, which is clearly reflected in its foreign policies and domestic legislation."

While these statements are technically not in conflict (Bush could have "allowed" missionaries, without having "sent" them), the denial is somewhat disingenuous.

¶ In his response dated December 1, Abou El Fadl writes, "I support President Bush and his efforts to build positive relations and democratic systems in the Middle East, and will continue to give my best efforts to ensure his success."

But an April profile in the *Los Angeles Times* offered this characterization of Abou El Fadl's reaction to the Iraq war: "Initially, Abou El Fadl thought a strike against Iraq could be moral. . . . He now believes that most Iraqis see the coalition effort as an invasion and an attempt to repeat the British colonial domination of their land. He opposes the war as immoral and mistrusts the intentions of his government."


Abou El Fadl
USCIRF

How does Abou El Fadl account for what was published in *October*? "The prevailing reaction I am getting from a lot of Egyptian friends is laughing. Everyone knows that anyone who is anyone in Egypt gets trashed by the Egyptian press." Egyptian writers and editors "try to speculate as to what would make the government happy." The decision to publish a distorted version of the interview may actually have little to do with him, he says. "There is this private conversation between the editor and someone else [who is powerful], and I am marginal to it." He calls the experience "humbling."

In conversation, Abou El Fadl projects calm conviction about the importance of individual rights, his disappointment at their absence from the new Afghan constitution, and his personal evolution from "*hadith* hurler" to near-secularist, and back to centrist. But he realizes that his views may be susceptible to misinterpretation. He frets that his "thought about religion in public life has become sufficiently nuanced and layered that it may be hard to impart."

Hillel Fradkin, president of the Ethics and Public Policy Center and a scholar of Islam, says he is "prepared to believe" the interview was distorted. "The formulas used in the interview, they're rather familiar." They are the standard fare of radical Egyptian journalism.

Nina Shea, Abou El Fadl's colleague on the Commission on International Religious Freedom, of which she is vice chair, also deplores Egyptian journalistic malpractice. She says the *October* interview "is not consistent with what I know of him. It's totally consistent with what I know of the Egyptian press," which she declares "the slimiest of the fever swamps." She speculates that *October*'s purpose may have been to discredit Abou El Fadl with U.S. diplomats in Cairo, who would have been sure to see the interview. Egyptian press strategies to discredit "influential moderate Muslims," she says, have become astonishingly complex and subtle.

Pipes, for his part, is unpersuaded. Calling Abou El Fadl a moderate, he says, is like making a distinction

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"between a moderate Nazi and a radical Nazi." Pipes concedes that Abou El Fadl "promotes a more sophisticated version of the Islamist project" and that he "distances himself from the more extremist [militant] versions, but that doesn't make him an anti-Islamist."

Shea says Abou El Fadl is "a very complex figure, he's a work in progress." She emphasizes that "what's at issue is Abou El Fadl's message, which is that Islam is a very complex and long-lived tradition. Those who say it is compatible with democracy are facile and probably ignorant."

So where does he really stand? One thing is clear: Those who hear "moderate" and think "secular" will be sorely disappointed by Abou El Fadl. "Fadl is a religious person," says Shea. "He is not a secular Muslim." His awkward engagement in the public policy debate over Islam and democracy is further evidence of just how difficult it will be for the Middle East to reinvent itself.

"I tend to see things in shades of gray," says Abou El Fadl. "Someone has to be as evil as bin Laden for me to say that he is bad." Assertions like this could soon cost Abou El Fadl his reputation as a moderate—and that is a depressing thought. He is dead right when he says: "If I am a Muslim militant, then all hope is lost." ♦

Put Out the Welcome Mat . . .

for illegal aliens' children who grew up here.

BY CHESTER E. FINN JR.

WHEN CONGRESS resumes in January, it should right a long-standing wrong in our immigration law: the punishment of hapless children whose parents brought them to America illegally, but who have never known any other land. One way is to pass the "DREAM" Act, which cleared the Senate Judiciary Committee in mid-autumn with strong bipartisan support.

As chairman Orrin Hatch recognizes, it's one thing to whack illegal adult immigrants. It's another to blight the lives of hard-working youngsters who want nothing more than to be full-fledged citizens, but are blocked by laws designed to punish their miscreant parents.

An estimated 50,000 "undocumented" kids graduate from U.S. high schools each year. "Most," Hatch says, are "honest and hard-working adolescents . . . [but] find themselves caught in a Catch-22 situation. As illegal immigrants, they cannot work legally. They are also effectively barred from developing academically beyond high school. . . . We have a choice to either keep these talented young people underground or give them a chance to contribute."

"Alex" is one such youngster. A babe in arms two decades ago when his teenaged parents slipped into California, he grew up in tough Los Angeles neighborhoods, attended troubled public schools, and has never been back to Central America.

Yes, his parents messed up. They entered illegally and failed to apply for papers or take advantage of amnesties. His father—an abusive sort—always said they would return to Guatemala. Now he's dead. His mother recently married an American and acquired a green card, but that would only help Alex if he were under 18. Meanwhile, his three younger siblings are all legal. So is his own infant daughter.

I came to know Alex when we took part in a PBS documentary that uses his painful saga in the L.A. schools to frame today's hot policy wrangles over testing and school choice. The producer and I were drawn to this young man by his keen intellect, self-awareness, and compassion. A reader and a poet, he's striven to be a surrogate father to his brothers and sister. Lately he's found work in nursing homes, where he entertains elderly residents with games, poems, and cheerful company. He charmed education secretary Rod Paige at the premier of *A.K.A. Creek: Educating a Big City Schoolboy*, the award-winning film that recounts his tale.

After years of school system bureaucrats and heedless teachers, Alex has earned his GED and is close to winning a proper diploma while also supporting a wife and baby. He'd be fine college material. But he can't go without financial aid, which he can't get without papers. Nor can he get a driver's license, health insurance, a better job—the list goes on.

Eager to see whether he could be "legalized," my wife and I engaged an immigration attorney, who found a series of cul-de-sacs like those Hatch outlined. Unless the

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"DREAM" Act or something like it passes, Alex's only hope of avoiding deportation is to find a member of Congress willing to sponsor a rare "private bill"—another avenue we're pursuing.

The DREAM (Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors) Act allows young people to apply for a 6-year grace period if they were under 16 when they entered the United States, have lived here 5 years, and graduated from high school. During that period, they qualify for in-state tuition and federal loans and cannot be deported. They can apply for green cards after completing two years of college or serving in the military. The DREAM Act is a tightly crafted, one-time relief measure that the Urban Institute estimates would transform up to 13,000 young people into legal Americans.

In Alex's own words (written for congressional consideration if we get to the "private bill" stage): "Why do I still dream of becoming a citizen? With my limited social and economic capacities, I have already managed to do a fair amount to advance myself, my family, and my country. I can only imagine the good I might be able to do for the country that I've loved and called my own ever since I knew my own name. I've made my share of mistakes along the way but I believe my accomplishments outweigh my defeats. All I ask for is the opportunity to give something back to the country that has given so much to me."

His fate under current law, however, is to be deported to the land of his birth, where, the *Washington Post* reports, "about 60 people are killed every week in Guatemala City alone," due to violence brought on by drug trafficking and "a broken justice system that investigates as little as 3 percent of all crime."

The Bush administration has taken no position on the DREAM Act. A few gutsy Republicans—including Hatch, Arizona congressman Jeff Flake, Finance Committee chairman Charles Grassley, and Foreign Relations chairman Dick Lugar—have risked the ire of their party's nativist claque by offering carefully crafted solutions to this and other vexing immigration problems. Predictably, Democrats embrace such changes. One might suppose GOP leaders with an eye on 2004, mindful of the swelling number of voters who are legal immigrants or their kin, would see some advantage in passing these measures.

But politics aside, young lives hang in the balance. My friend Alex's is one of them. ♦

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The Case for Putin

Don't write off Russia's president.

BY LEWIS E. LEHRMAN

AFTER THE LATE OCTOBER arrest of Mikhail Khodorkovsky, the Russian oil-industry billionaire indicted for fraud and tax evasion, a striking consensus emerged among American commentators: President Vladimir Putin was moving Russia toward dictatorship. U.S. intellectuals and pundits, liberal and conservative alike, responded with an apologia of Khodorkovsky and a parallel and pervasive assault on Putin.

But there is another possible interpretation of the controversial arrest: that Putin acted not against democracy but against corruption; that he played the part of a prudent constitutional chief executive in enforcing the laws of the Russian Federation; and that the Russian people sense this, which is one reason they gave Putin's party and its allied parties a landslide victory in the Duma elections held on December 7.

If this latter view is correct—if Khodorkovsky actually brought about his own downfall, through pride, ambition, and the criminal misdeeds recounted in the 40,000-page indictment—the eventual trial should vindicate Putin in the eyes of reasonable people. In a second term, Putin could emerge as a strong leader of a liberal democracy.

Whether such predictions are justified, only time will tell. Putin, to be sure, may be criticized on a number of important counts. But there are also positive trends in Russia that the new pessimistic consensus underrates. And there are good reasons for skepticism about some of the defenses that have been made of Khodorkovsky. Both aspects deserve more attention than the media have given them.

To dispose of the latter first, when the apologias for Khodorkovsky and his company, Yukos, are thoroughly examined, it is a safe bet that some will be found to have been unduly influenced, directly or indirectly, by the company and its chief. But more important than the motives of some of the apologists, many of their arguments hold up poorly on examination.

Remarkably, none of Putin's critics, as far as I know, has asserted Khodorkovsky's innocence (though his lawyers have). Instead, many claim that Putin's government is engaging in "selective justice." The implication is that no criminal law should be enforced against any lawbreaker unless it is enforced against every lawbreaker. But even in mature democracies, the scarcity of litigation resources and unevenness of evidence make justice necessarily selective. American prosecutors and the American public understand perfectly well that our own financial scandals lead to the indictment, much less conviction, of only a fraction of actual offenders. As for President Putin's terse remark that Russians should be equal under the law, from the biggest billionaire to the lowliest beggar, it expresses a kind of common sense about the law that Americans naturally apply in the Enron case.

The allegations of anti-Semitism directed at President Putin are similarly flimsy. With his sensible relationship with Israel and evenhanded statements about Russia's own minorities ("bandits" excepted), Putin has been generally sympathetic to the Jewish community. And the allegations that Putin's conduct in the Khodorkovsky case demonstrates a sustained campaign to shut down public debate is a canard, as even a casual reading of the vigorous press and web exchanges in Moscow will show. A *New York Times* editorial of December 8 remarked: "Today there are 23 parties and lots of furious campaigning. Despite the Kremlin's control over national television, newspapers and websites provide lively commentary and criticism."

The politics of the Khodorkovsky case are, of course, significant. It has been reported recently in Moscow that some oligarchs (including Khodorkovsky) made a transparent attempt to buy a minority of deputies in the Duma sufficient to block, among other things, a more equitable system of taxation, fairer to the Russian people and less favorable to the extractive industries (dominated by the oligarchs). Deputies from several parties (otherwise opposed to one another) were targeted. This particular maneuver will not likely be attempted again. Lobbying, of course, has its place in any democracy, but deputies for hire do not. It is now likely that Russia's tax system will become more equitable: The very rich will pay a fairer share, manufacturing will be encouraged, the average citizen will benefit, and the Promethean greed of the Yeltsin era will be channeled into the market, with benefits for all.

Meanwhile, consider only a few of Putin's achievements since the total collapse of Russia's economy in 1998 and 1999. Today, Russia is in the early stages of building a civil society after 1,000 years of tyranny at the hands of Mongols, czars, boyars, and Communists. Perestroika, then Boris Yeltsin, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, opened the way for a decade of colossal corruption characterized by incompetence and official self-dealing. Putin has led a vital, four-year drive, first as prime minister, then as president, to contain these corrosive forces. As he said in September, "If by democracy one means the dissolution of the state, then we do not need such democracy."

A reading of Russia's financial performance will show that central bank reserves are over $70 billion, up from

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national bankruptcy in 1998—with an extraordinary rise in reserves of over 25 percent since January 2003. The flight of capital predicted at the time of Khodorkovsky's arrest has not materialized. The fiscal budget is in surplus. The current account surplus continues to add to these resources; some government debt has been repaid, some refunded. Russia's credit rating has risen from bankruptcy to Moody's investment grade. Reports on manufacturing growth are exceptional. President Putin's first term has been, in a word, a financial triumph.

The Yeltsin model of selling out the Russian people's assets, for almost nothing, to the "family" and the oligarchs will forever be deeply regretted in Russia. But privatization will persist, despite warnings to the contrary from Khodorkovsky's apologists. True, some Yukos shares will remain frozen until the criminal trial is over (a not uncommon practice under both U.S. and Russian law), but this period will be associated with continued growth and stability in the Russian economy, to the increasing benefit of middle-income and working people. Over the next five years, the European Union, China, and other countries will vigorously compete to invest in Russia.

The fact is, the positive economic trends set in motion during the presidency of Vladimir Putin are every bit as significant as those in China, India, and Brazil. Russia's private sector already accounts for almost 80 percent of national output, up from below 10 percent in 1990. Ordinary Russians own land and apartments and operate farms that 10 years ago they could only dream of, and that 20 years ago were possible only for members of the nomenklatura. Income tax rates have been reduced to 13 percent. Military spending has shrunk to a percentage of GDP comparable to that in the United States. Russia is now among the top eight recipients of foreign investment. Russians with good technical educations are being recruited and paid well, in Russia, by companies as diverse as Samsung, Intel, and Boeing. In a recent *Financial Times* piece, the Russian economy was projected to surpass that of the United Kingdom in just over two decades. The Russian economy should continue to grow at 6 percent to 7 percent for the rest of the decade. Wages, now rising as much as 20 percent a year, will grow further with improvements in productivity.

Then there are the foreign policy issues. Chechnya is, unfortunately, all too typical of history's bloody ethnic and civil wars. There is much to mourn in its excesses. Still, both recent wars in Chechnya began under Yeltsin, while President Putin is trying to end the conflict. And al Qaeda's collaborators in Chechnya are being confronted, just as the Chechen Islamist terrorists who seized a Moscow theater in October 2002 were destroyed, albeit at the tragic cost of 129 innocent lives.

Washington's request that Russian troops leave Georgia, as previously agreed, has been correctly reemphasized by Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld. Still, one must be aware of Russia's historic interests in Georgia. But agreeing to disagree with President Putin on Georgia, and cautioning him about his intensifying diplomacy on behalf of Russia's commercial and security links to Eastern Europe, Moldova, the Caspian, and the Baltic states, need not ignite a new Cold War. Our country, after all, fairly disputes Russian foreign policy on matters of American national interest and principle—such as Iran, Iraq, and North Korea. President Bush sees this clearly, and his recent Camp David summit with Putin suggests that American-Russian entente will prevail. The consolidation of entente with Russia, if we can keep it, will be seen as a historic accomplishment by Bush and Putin, one for which our grandchildren will be grateful—not least because Russia and America must prepare to contain Chinese hegemony and expansionism in Asia.

The strong showing of President Putin's party in the Duma elections—United Russia and its potential allies could have a two-thirds majority—should accelerate the reform of civil society. To be sure, there is much to criticize about the recent elections, and the media have reported the criticism, often quoting Communist party accusations, among others, of unfair play by Putin's party. Nevertheless, the Duma elections and the presidential election due in March 2004 will gradually reduce the anarchy and corruption in the Duma (known by some in Russia as the Durdon, or the nuthouse). The Russian nationalist parties' calls in the campaign for a fairer distribution of wealth and more equitable tax system are faint echoes of the post-World War II Democratic party. But the rhetoric of progressive taxation will not lead to a rollback of privatization. The more malignant, xenophobic rhetoric of the nationalists is to be deplored, but it is safe to predict that it will go nowhere with President Putin.

Above all, future historians will appraise the immediate past and the developments of the next five years in light of the disorder of the decade 1989-99. An overwrought media, curiously infatuated with Khodorkovsky—and before him, with the oligarchs Boris Berezovsky and Vladimir Gusinsky—will gradually come round to acknowledging Putin's achievements.

A more seasoned Putin and a reformed administration and presidential staff, for their part, will prove to have learned much from the Khodorkovsky affair. More confident communication, more transparent legal processes, and better internal government coordination should enable Putin to handle major public debates with greater effectiveness. Khodorkovsky and the oligarchs, too, will have learned much about hubris—that there is no such lasting thing on earth as Prometheus unbound.

Finally, watch the losers in the recent elections. For unlike political losers in the Stalin era, they still have plenty of opportunity for success in Putin's Russia. As a victorious Putin himself remarked of the defeated candidates, "All their ideas, all their professional capabilities, if they decide to offer them to the government and society, will be put to good use." ♦

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The Gift of Capital

Rose Onyango, an AIDS orphan in Kenya who lives with her uncle Caleb Onyango and 23 siblings, holds a Heifer International-provided chicken that provides eggs for food and income.

All around the world, Heifer International is working—giving cows, goats and other livestock to impoverished, undernourished families around the globe. With training in animal care and environmentally sound agricultural practices, recipients lift themselves out of poverty to become self-reliant. And they agree to "Pass on the Gift"—to share offspring of their animals with others in need. As recipients share their livestock and their knowledge with others, an expanding network of hope and dignity is created that reaches around the world.

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Gephardt's Last Stand

The Iowa showdown

By David Tell

South Central Iowa, December 7

The campaign calendar is against you. Already the camera crews and stage-prop crowds are beginning to take over, and the rope lines are going up, and soon enough it'll become pretty much physically impossible to form a personal impression of the Democratic party's likely nominee for president next year. None of the men who still have a realistic hope for that prize will any longer be within reach of even the most determined civilian—certainly not where more-than-momentary, relatively unscripted, and intimate conversational encounters are concerned. In that sense, at least, our current election cycle is operating like any other in the modern, television age.

But we're not quite there yet. The window hasn't closed for good, and a man can still watch a real-life presidential candidate talking to real-life voters, up close and in the flesh, for hours on end, especially if he's willing to wake up at 4 A.M. for a predawn flight to Des Moines on a Sunday. I have taken such a flight today, in order to watch Richard Gephardt campaign among the Iowans he hopes will vote for him in next month's caucuses. And I have spent my time on the mostly empty plane trying to read my way to a provisional conclusion about why our current election cycle, in every essential respect, camera crews and rope lines notwithstanding, is very much *not* operating on a conventional schedule, or by conventional logic. Put another way: How come it's Howard Dean, of all people, and not someone like . . . well, Gephardt, who appears, weeks and weeks before the first official ballot has been cast, to be running away with the race?

A new polling analysis by the Pew Research Center confirms the anomaly. And rather deepens the mystery, in fact. The ordinary rule of thumb is that people are disposed to "vote their hearts" in early-state presidential primaries. Which is thought to mean that hard-boiled general-election imperatives remain a relatively distant concern in these contests: Iowa and New Hampshire Democrats will be less likely preoccupied with identifying the candidate best equipped to unseat President Bush in November, and more likely, instead, simply to choose the guy whose views most closely match their own. Or so it's expected.

But over the past three weeks, no fewer than seven different reputable and well-known polling outfits have released data indicating that Howard Dean is thoroughly dominating the once-heavily-favored John Kerry in New Hampshire—by a 24-percentage-point average margin. And Pew's research suggests that neither man's views have much to do with it: "Supporters of Dean and Kerry exhibit few issue differences." If anything, on the domestic policy front, which both candidates ritually contend ought to be paramount, a significant number of New Hampshire Democrats, whether they realize it or not, are making up their minds *despite* the issues; a plurality of Dean supporters, for example, actually disagree with Dean—and agree with Kerry—about the need to preserve some portion of the Bush tax cuts. New Hampshire, then, is not tilting hard toward Howard Dean because people are "voting their hearts," as that phrase is traditionally understood.

Instead, according to Pew, Dean is far ahead of Kerry in New Hampshire, and threatening to snuff out Dick Gephardt here in Iowa, because he enjoys a sizable lead in both states among Democrats "who place a greater priority on defeating Bush." In other words: Dean voters become Dean voters—defying all the standard predictive formulas; on paper, either Kerry or Gephardt would be their party's stronger general-election standard-bearer—because they've convinced themselves that Dean's the winner's bet. Who on earth are these people?

In demographic terms, it turns out they are very much who their detractors say they are: an elite sociocultural minority of the overall American electorate. The Pew study reports that Howard Dean appeals most intensely to "the well-educated liberal wing" of the Democratic party.

David Tell is opinion editor of The Weekly Standard.

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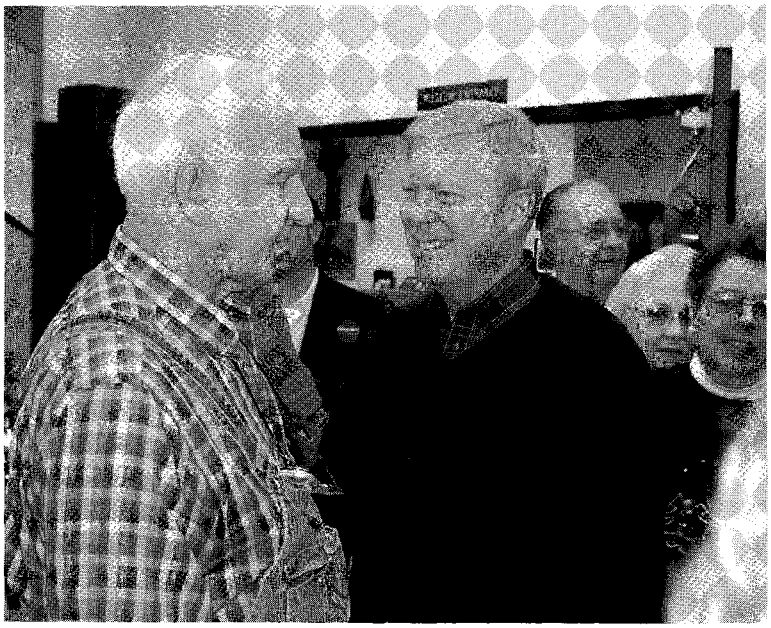
Here in Iowa, for instance, more than two-thirds of Dean's supporters have attended college and more than half favor gay marriage. By contrast, fewer than half of Dick Gephardt's supporters have made it past high school and nearly two-thirds of them oppose gay marriage.

Then there's the matter of how the Dean people look and sound. They "tend to be somewhat younger than voters who prefer Gephardt," as the Pew paper blandly notes. And they are unusually passionate—whether or not "voting their hearts" is the right phrase for it—about their cause. Also in my lap during the flight out to Des Moines is this morning's *New York Times Magazine*, whose cover story, "The Dean Swarm," is a deadpan and dazzling piece of psychological investigative reporting into the youth movement that is propelling this year's Democratic front-runner. The Pew numbers reflect a Dean campaign that isn't really about issues per se. This *Times* story implies that the Dean campaign isn't even about Howard Dean, really.



David Tell

Gephardt in the Knoxville, Iowa, National Sprint Car Hall of Fame

A 24-year-old Dean field organizer, who "broke into tears several times while trying to explain" the point, tells freelancer Samantha M. Shapiro that for her, "the thought that he'll be president is a side effect. This campaign is about allowing people to come together and tell their life stories." Shapiro introduces us to 21-year-old Gary Brooks, who "drove from Alabama to Burlington at the beginning of last summer, after hearing Dean on the radio just once." Brooks now shares a cubicle with 20-year-old Zack Rosen, who dropped out of college and moved to Vermont—"I just knew *this is the guy*"—after reading about Dean on the campaign website for all of 20 minutes. Rosen admits, however, that he'd probably still be back in school had his first serious girlfriend not broken up with him last spring. Similarly, Rosen's 26-year-old colleague Clay Johnson got involved after a young woman named Merrill told him she didn't love him anymore. Johnson "stripped to his underwear, lay on the floor in a fetal position and remained there for days, occasionally sipping from an old carton of orange juice." Alarmed, Johnson's friends scratched their heads for a way to snap him out of it. "Finally they hit on one: Howard Dean."

It's a fairly safe guess that no one in Iowa is backing Richard Gephardt for president because otherwise he'd be lying half-naked in a fetal position mourning a lost girlfriend. Gephardt voters are an older crowd, people in their 40s and 50s and 60s, most of whom probably haven't had a girlfriend for a very long time—since they typically show up at his community meetings with their wives in tow—and few of whom could afford to lie around in a fetal position even if they wanted to, because they have to work for a living, generally with their hands. These are overwhelmingly blue-collar affairs. There's a rickety-looking "Boilermakers for Gephardt" van parked outside all three events I attend today, one of the many ancillary services being provided to the candidate by the "Alliance for Economic Justice," an ad hoc coalition of trade unions who've endorsed his campaign. And inside, at each stop, ID buttons from one or another of these unions adorn an overwhelming majority of audience and volunteer-staffer lapels.

Dick Gephardt's union support is less than uniform, of course, as he is constantly reminded by the newspapers. Back in October, he was denied the umbrella labor-movement endorsement he'd badly wanted when the AFL-CIO's executive board decided to keep the organization officially neutral in the Democratic primaries. And last month the movement's two largest members, the government workers' union AFSCME and the Service Employees International, actually defected to Howard Dean. A bitter, distracting rift has since developed in the House of Labor, with pro-Gephardt industrial unions accusing AFL-CIO chief John Sweeney, who himself once led the Service Employees, of bias and betrayal. And in purely practical terms—given the extra manpower and financial help involved: phone banks, mail drops, election-night voter roundups—yes, Dick Gephardt would unquestionably be better fixed to win the Democratic nomination had Howard Dean not managed to poach a significant chunk of his labor base. The AFSCME defection alone,

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Gephardt privately fumed at the time, may effectively have "turned over the country to Republicans for four more years."

He has remained characteristically optimistic in public, however. And having now seen the post-AFL-CIO-"setback" version of his Iowa campaign firsthand, I'm not sure he isn't right to be. AFSCME and the Service Employees are unions representing public-sector employees, who have relatively secure public-sector jobs, and whose principal worry is consequently that their relatively generous public-sector job benefits might one day be reduced. The 21 trade-union internationals that have lined up behind Dick Gephardt, on the other hand, are filled with people who make things in American factories —which not infrequently close down or get moved overseas—and whose principal worry is consequently a rather more immediate and urgently political one: that they might be left unemployed and destitute by some macroeconomic exigency or twist of federal trade law. Maybe he has been forced by circumstance to focus and intensify his appeal to such voters, I don't know. But whatever the reason, over the past couple months Gephardt has become a considerably more effective—even commanding—stump speaker.

No, the import-export stuff hasn't got quite the distinguishing bite it might have. By now, each of the other first-tier Democrats in the race, none more crudely and completely than Dean, has long since effected a tactical policy shift in Gephardt's direction, walking away from the free-trade past and loudly promising a fair-trade future in its stead. But Gephardt's remains the most transparently sincere and compelling fair-trade pitch; even if you reject the argument intellectually, it takes a heart of stone not to be moved by his description and denunciation of the "human exploitation" produced in NAFTA's near-term wake. The same goes for Gephardt's insistence that he'd be the president most loyally committed to traditional Democratic party principles as a whole. It's true, after all: He would. And it seems to be true as well, at least according to Pew's latest data, that party dogma still matters to Democrats. Howard Dean may have hurtled into the front-runner position by monopolizing the affections of those for whom it doesn't much matter, people who *just wanna beat Bush, dammit*. But most Democrats throughout the country—and in Iowa and New Hampshire, too—continue to tell pollsters that they'd prefer to nominate a man who's right on the issues, even if he might not be the very fastest horse in the stable.

In any case, Gephardt is nowadays making an ever more voluble and explicit and plausibly persuasive case that he, not Dean, is in fact that fastest horse. Gephardt wants to beat Bush as much as anybody, he tells an attentive group of Iowa Democrats in an Oskaloosa junior high school conference room this morning. But "if you're gonna beat him, you've got to beat him in the Midwest." Democrats will win California and New York, that much is assured. But they've also got to win "states like Iowa, Missouri, Illinois, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Ohio, West Virginia," he explains. Then comes Gephardt's kicker: "If Al Gore had beaten George Bush in Missouri alone, which he almost did, even without Florida, he would be president today." And "I *know* I can beat George Bush in Missouri."

Howard Dean can't make that claim.

Last time I saw him in Iowa, earlier this fall, the fact that Gephardt had coauthored the House resolution authorizing "Bush's war" was clearly still costing him votes. The subject came up at his every public appearance, and the people who asked him about it invariably seemed disappointed or even peeved with his answers. This time, though, the mood appears to have changed. Perhaps Gephardt has already lost all the Iraq-related votes there are to lose. Or perhaps he's simply figured out how to parry the challenge more deftly, for it certainly can't be said to have disappeared. The war still comes up—in Oskaloosa, and at later meetings in Knoxville and Indianola as well—and at bottom Gephardt's impressively stubborn defense of himself is still the same: His vote was the right thing to do; he had every reason to believe that Saddam Hussein's determination to acquire weapons of mass destruction represented a real and imminent danger to the United States, and the risk to American lives, were those weapons to be diverted into terrorist hands, obliged Gephardt to act as he had.

But he says all this more coherently and less apologetically than he used to, and, knowing his audience, he nowadays sweetens it with some Howard Dean-worthy indignation over the Bush administration's postwar diplomacy and reconstruction policies: "This president is the *worst*. He *scares* me. He *frightens* me." Three times Gephardt is called upon to deliver this speechlet over the course of the day, and three times the likely Iowa caucus-goer who's requested it from him listens while nodding his head in assent—even before the part about how "this president is the worst" arrives. Yes, they themselves opposed the war and still do, the head-nodders all later tell me. And yes, nevertheless, Dick Gephardt's position on the matter is something they can live with. He's got their votes.

This kind of equanimity in the face of divergent political opinion, incidentally, is a general characteristic of the Gephardt campaign, populated

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as it is by genuine grownups who know full well that it's sometimes necessary to stand your ground and fight, but also know that it's very rarely necessary or appropriate to pee on the other fellow's shoes. In this respect, too, Richard Gephardt would seem to enjoy a major "electability" advantage over Howard Dean. Dean and his "swarm" routinely radiate a naive, belligerent, almost incontinent hostility toward anyone who they suspect might not be One of Us, which is not the sort of attitude you'd ordinarily expect to see in a front-running, major-party presidential campaign—and not, for that matter, the sort of attitude any responsible man, regardless of his politics, would ever want to see installed in the Oval Office.

The Gephardt campaign is something altogether different. When I showed up for this morning's first event in Oskaloosa I was immediately greeted by a Gephardt volunteer wearing a Teamsters button, who asked me where I was from, thanked me for coming, shook my hand, told me he read THE WEEKLY STANDARD all the time—and then proved it, to my astonishment, by asking me whether I didn't think he deserved "extra credit for not going like this," as he wiped the hand I'd just grabbed across his chest. It was an allusion to a story I've previously told in these pages about my introductory encounter with Howard Dean this past March. "What a jerk Dean is," this Teamster gentleman mumbled with a rueful smile, like it was the most natural thing in the world for the two of us to agree about. "Come on in, have a seat."

An irritable local asked Gephardt what he planned to do by way of punishment for the congressional Republicans. Gephardt briefly looked distressed.

Half an hour later, an irritable Oskaloosa local asked Gephardt what, as president, he planned to do by way of punishment for the congressional Republicans who have done so much to "undermine our democracy." For the only time all day, Gephardt briefly looked distressed, paused, and then calmly remembered how, during the 2002 midterm elections

> I had a lot of Democrats come to me and say, "Boy, if we win we've got to give it back to 'em, we've got to come back and hit 'em just as hard as they hit us." And I said, "Not on my watch." Because when you do that it's just revenge, it's a cycle of revenge, and you're going to wind up ruining this country. So when I'm president . . . I'm gonna try to put together bipartisan efforts. I'm gonna try to unite the country to solve tough problems.

A few hours later in Knoxville, his voice beginning to quiver just a bit, an unselfconscious Gephardt, who'd just spent 20 minutes describing what a mess George W. Bush has made of things, nevertheless found reason to say that whenever he goes on foreign trips, "I come back and I want to grab people and say 'Do you know how *lucky* you are?'"

Richard Gephardt is a genial, decent man. He'd be a president you'd have to work awfully hard to hate.

Before he can even dream of being president, however, he's first got to wrest his party's nomination away from Howard Dean. Which means he has to win Iowa, since a subsequent Dean victory in New Hampshire seems virtually guaranteed at this point, and a two-state sweep, as even Gephardt has conceded, would mean "everyone else is toast."

How does he plan to get past the hurdles his campaign now appears to confront in Iowa, I ask Gephardt when I finally catch him alone, at the end of a 14-hour campaign schedule, carrying his own bags through the airport back in Washington, almost home. That morning's *New York Times* had a story in which unnamed Gephardt campaign aides were said to admit that their treasury would be empty on the day after the caucuses. Dean, by contrast, has all the money he could possibly want, and has already begun spending $400,000 a week on Iowa television time—an ad blitz that has vaulted "The Swarm" back on top in the latest *Des Moines Register* poll. How can Gephardt hope to keep up?

The *Times* was wrong, he says; "stories aren't always true, as you know." Those unnamed aides hadn't been speaking on his behalf "or on behalf of any known or knowable reality," either. "We've clearly raised enough money to compete effectively all the way through the first group of primaries." Besides, "money isn't everything in politics."

Money aside, though, has Gephardt also had a chance to read the "Dean Swarm" magazine report elsewhere in the *Times* that morning? He has, and he found it "most interesting," he tells me with a perfectly friendly and perfectly ambiguous smile. Doesn't he also think it suggests a serious and unusually tricky electioneering problem, I press? We're led to believe that Howard Dean is attracting sizable, fervent, financially generous support from a group of people more or less completely unsusceptible to ordinary political argument. How do you defend yourself against that?

"No question, it's a problem," Gephardt answers. "But you've got to ask yourself, 'How many of these people are there? How many of these people can there be?'" ♦

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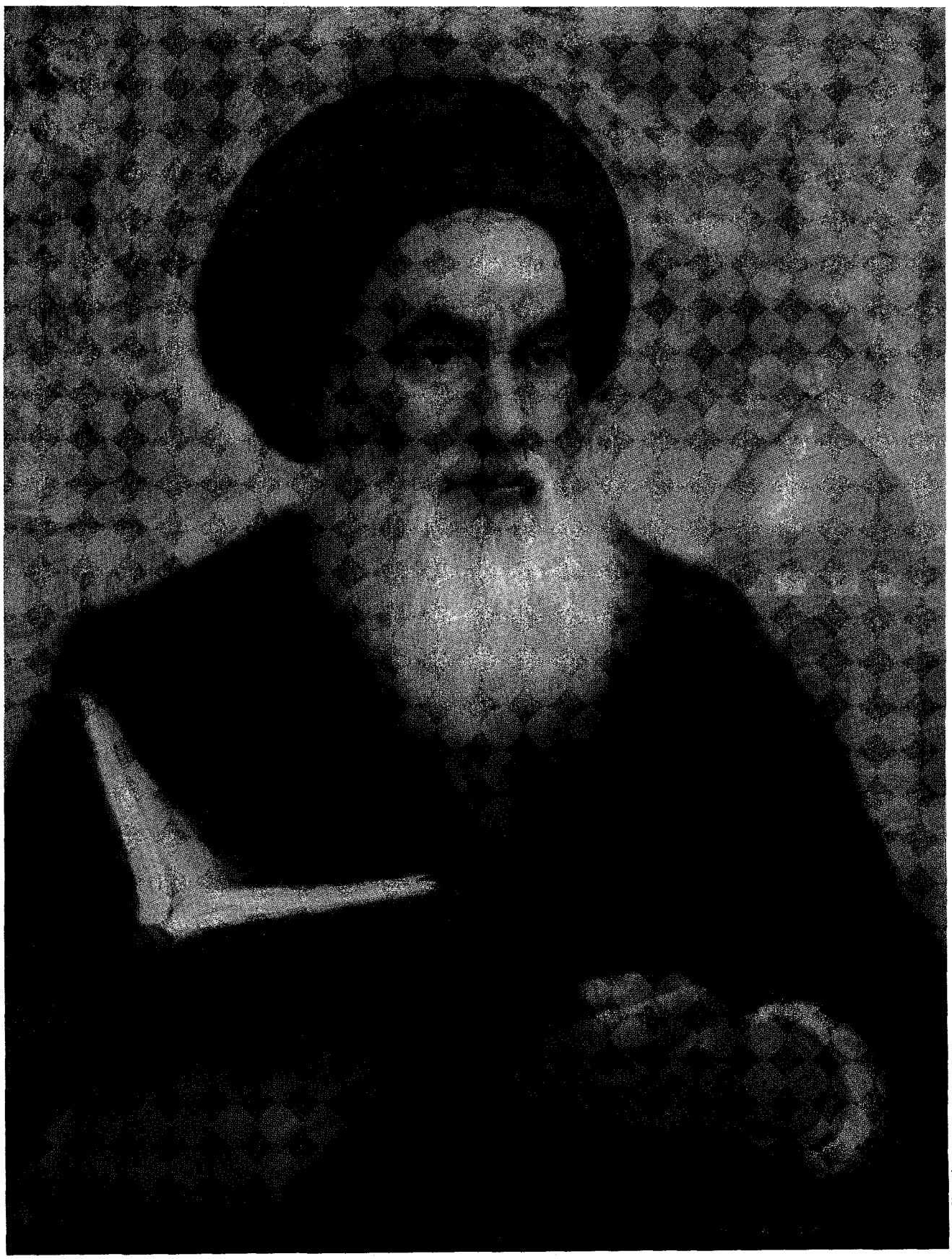

Donato Giancola

Grand Ayatollah Sistani, Iraq's senior Shiite cleric

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A Difficult Marriage

How Iraqi Shiites could save the presidency of George W. Bush

By Reuel Marc Gerecht

Ever since 1979, Shiite Muslim clerics have scared Americans. The trepidation is, of course, understandable. Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini energized a generation of Islamic radicals. His theocratic revolution in Iran held 52 Americans hostage for 444 days. His disciples directed and incited lethal attacks against the United States. The slaughter of U.S. soldiers in Beirut in 1983 and at Khobar in Saudi Arabia in 1996 were inspirational for Osama bin Laden and other Sunni holy warriors who have promised victory through terrorism.

Far more often than their Sunni Muslim counterparts, Shiite clerics are charismatic. Their long, arduous legal education, which builds a self-confident, serious elite, and their historic position between ruler and ruled have often earned them the respect of common man and king. Shiite clerics have been powers to be reckoned with—complimented, appeased, or squashed—in great part because their authority has been popularly based. In an autocratic Muslim world, they have, more often than not, been defenders of decency. The greatest strength of the Muslim community has always been its secure and ordered home, and the clergy has been its redoubtable guardian. Even the most irreligious Shiites can revere these men because they are vivid, stubborn repositories of the wisdom, vicissitudes, and pride of an often abused and maligned community.

Shiism teaches that individual men, through their determination, sacrifice, and suffering, shape history. The Prophet Muhammad's grandson Hussein, the father of all Muslim martyrs, did not flee certain death on the plains of Karbala in southern Iraq because his cause was just. His end, even more than the unlucky life of his father, the Caliph Ali, has become the baptismal font of the Shiite identity. Like Christians, Shiites are pretty sure that redemption will not come in this life. Their clerics often see themselves in a continuing passion play of good versus evil. They have stood between tyrants and the oppressed, between domineering Sunnis and belittled Shiites, and, not infrequently, between threatening foreigners and besieged Muslims. Though in modern times the Shiite clergy have become a diverse lot—progressives, traditionalists, revolutionaries, and reactionaries—they are similar in their continuing firm belief that the clergy has a historic duty to defend the flock. Guided by the Holy Law, nationalism, Marx, or John Locke, they see themselves as a vanguard for *and* against change.

The Coalition Provisional Authority and the Bush administration are now unavoidably part of the great Shiite drama that is unfolding inside Iraq. Shiites will determine the fate of a democratic Iraq; they will likely determine the political future of George W. Bush. If all goes well with Iraq's Shiites, the eventual spread of democracy throughout the Middle East becomes a real possibility. If the Shiites go south on us, then the Middle East's next "Liberal Age" (a tolerably accurate description of the period from 1880 to 1945) will likely be a long time coming. And if things fall apart, what will the future look like? When planning for success, it's always a good idea to imagine failure.

What an Iraqi Shiite dictatorship would do is difficult to foresee, but Shiite authoritarian rule is inevitable if the democratic experiment fails. The Shiites represent at least 60 percent of the Iraqi population. (The rule of thumb in the Muslim Middle East is that the Shiite population in Sunni-dominated countries is underestimated in official figures. The common breakdown of the Iraqi population—55 percent Shiite Arab, 20 percent Sunni Arab, 20 percent Kurd, and 5 percent Turkoman/Christian Arab—probably gives too much to the Arab Sunnis, who have ruled the country since 1920.)

After the brutal repression the Shiites have endured in the country since the collapse of the Ottoman empire, it is most unlikely that they will again accept Sunni

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Arab suzerainty. The old legitimizing engine of Sunni domination—Arab nationalism—is dead among the Shiites. Though the Shiites have so far shown remarkable forbearance towards the Sunnis who were the backbone of Saddam Hussein's regime (the former know the latter, too, were trapped in an Orwellian nightmare), it's doubtful that you could find many Shiites who still trust the political reflexes of even their most abused Sunni compatriots. The Shiites also know that the Arab Sunni Middle East didn't cry in 1991 when Saddam Hussein slaughtered thousands of them during the great rebellion following the first Gulf War.

A Shiite dictatorship could possibly fracture Iraq. Though there is no ill will between the Sunni Kurds and the Arab Shiites, the Kurds, who have the weakest Iraqi identity among the country's major groups, could decide not to risk another Arab dictatorship. After 10 years of autonomy, a great many younger Kurds know no Arabic. De facto separatism could become de jure. Though profound Iraqi nationalists, the Arab Shiites may not have the stomach to do to the Kurds what Arab Sunni regimes have done since 1925. Conversely, fear among the Kurds of a possible Turkish invasion—which has become less likely with the growth of Turkish democracy—might not trump the fear of a new centralized Iraqi Arab power.

In any case, the Shiites will eventually triumph over their better organized, more militarily adept, former Arab Sunni overlords. The victory could well be ugly. The larger Arab Sunni world will undoubtedly be horrified. They are already aghast that the Americans are trying to create a Shiite-dominated democratic state in their midst. (The Jordanians, Egyptians, and Saudis—all devoutly Sunni societies—are particularly apoplectic on the Iraqi Shiite issue.) But once the historic emotions have calmed down, these undemocratic regimes may well realize an authoritarian Shiite government in Baghdad is far preferable to a functioning democracy next door. All the despotic regimes of the Middle East survived Ayatollah Khomeini and his revolution. No matter what Shiite force gains the upper hand in a new Iraqi dictatorship, it cannot possibly generate the whirlwind that Iran's imam unleashed. Democracy, on the other hand, is the great unknown—and easily most feared—revolutionary force in the region.

The failure of the democratic experiment in Iraq would, however, have much worse consequences for the United States. George Bush has staked his presidency on Iraq. Indeed, the United States' standing in the Middle East and in the world depends on the transformation of American power into an Iraqi democracy. America is invested far more in Iraq today than we were in prerevolutionary Iran. The shah's fall and the triumph of Khomeini set in motion in the Middle East the perception that the United States could not hold its ground. Psychologically, America's failure in Iran reinforced the Vietnam syndrome in Washington. The collapse of American will in Beirut in 1983 and Somalia in 1993 is inextricably linked to the Iranian crisis of '79. In this sense, and in others, Ayatollah Khomeini produced Osama bin Laden and the Sunni jihadist creed that America can be worn down through terrorism.

Failure in Iraq would surely produce a new bout of timidity in America's foreign policy elite. One can already see in Washington and New York, among both Republicans and Democrats, a strong desire to return to a pre-9/11 world, where the fear of terrorism and rogue states did not define America's international relations and roil transatlantic ties. The French and the Germans, and perhaps the Brits, too (with the possible exception of Prime Minister Tony Blair), desperately want the Americans to act less "Promethean," to let democracy spread to the Arabs in the fullness of time, to treat terrorism, as the Clinton administration did, as a police problem, and to view again the Israeli-Palestinian confrontation as the fulcrum of the Middle East. It's easy to imagine Peace-Now Democrats and Wall Street-realist Republicans, chastened by Iraq, galloping backwards in time.

Unfortunately for them, what psychologically happened in the Middle East after '79 is likely to happen again if Iraq becomes unmanageable for the United States. In the Middle East and in the angry Muslim communities of Western Europe, bin Ladenism is by no means dead. Neither is the Lebanese Hezbollah, whose members are the terrorist foot soldiers of Iran's hardcore clergy. The Hezbollah and al Qaeda are spiritually, if not operationally, joined in their anti-Americanism and in the belief that terrorism is the most efficient expression of God's will on earth. An American retreat from Iraq—even if we camouflage it as an "orderly" withdrawal preceded by the successful "Iraqification" of security forces—will be seen as a stunning American defeat, both by our friends and our enemies in the Middle East. Rogue and non-rogue states of the region could enthusiastically default to their modus vivendi with militant Islam in an effort to co-opt its renewed strength spawned by America's retreat. The officially supported conservative Egyptian and Saudi presses give a good idea how fear and hatred of America can create common ground between otherwise hostile parties. This reinforcing mixture of conservative Muslim despotism and

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Islamic fundamentalism has been a major catalyst for bin Ladenism.

A regime like clerical Iran's, which has a longstanding affection for terrorism, might decide the moment is ripe to hit the United States again, as it did in Lebanon. If Tehran believes America is retreating from Iraq, the odds are poor that it will fear a preemptive American strike against its nuclear-weapons program. Without that restraining fear—irrespective of the brilliance of European diplomacy—a nuclear-armed clerical regime is inevitable. Perceiving stultifying weakness in Washington, the revolutionary hard core in Tehran could develop a more liberal policy of "detention" for the members of al Qaeda, who are, so says Iran's foreign minister, now under arrest. With a secure base of operations, al Qaeda could plot and plan more professionally. Men who live to embrace God through suicide and the slaughter of Americans could again more easily find and fortify each other.

And Iraq could become quickly unmanageable if only a small slice of the Shiite community became guerrillas. We cannot long garrison and pacify an entire country we intend to democratize. For good reason, we don't have the will, and we probably don't have the military means, to take on Shiite insurrectionists in numbers. The British successfully did it after World War I, but they had the Sunnis as allies, and the Shiite community was seriously divided. The Brits then were also willing to use tactics that we today aren't.

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It would be enormously difficult for the most moderate of clerics in Iraq to encourage calm and cooperation with Americans once U.S. counterinsurgency operations among the Shiites reached a certain amplitude. The political "Iraqification" of the country, which in great part means enfranchising the Shiites, would fall apart. The Coalition Provisional Authority and the Bush administration have assumed that the Shiite community will continue to support the American occupation of Iraq. Contrary to so much press reporting, the Shiites have indeed welcomed the Americans as liberators. There has been substantial, if indirect, cooperation between the Americans and senior clerics of the Shiite holy cities of Najaf and Karbala. Three of the four grand ayatollahs of Najaf have met with American officials. The most senior cleric, Ali Sistani, has not, though his minions have.

A general consensus has indeed developed within the CPA and the Pentagon that the traditional clerics, particularly Sistani and his followers, more or less have to play along with the Americans since they, too, sincerely want stability in the country. And, after all, they have as much to fear from radical Shiites, like the young clerical firebrand Moktada al-Sadr, as the Americans. They certainly don't want to aid and abet the Sunni Baathist reactionaries and holy warriors who are trying to abort a new order in Iraq. Some CPA and senior administration officials have even questioned whether Sistani really has that much clout. Iraq is a big country, Shiites are by no means all the same, and urban, secularized Shiites are obviously abundant (especially to CPA officials, who can't because of security restrictions socialize much with the natives). Some administration and CPA officials have even viewed dismissively the famous fatwa of Sistani declaring null and void the legitimacy of any nonelected constitutional assembly. The fatwa was, it appears, the reaction to a mischievous question put to the cleric by an Agence France-Presse reporter. (The journalist queried the grand ayatollah about whether he knew that an American Jew was helping to write the Iraqi constitution. The Jew in question was apparently Noah Feldman, a law professor at NYU who served as a legal adviser to the Provisional Authority.) A judicial response to such a naughty, flippant question does not deserve, so the Americans' reasoning went, that much serious consideration.

This is, of course, the official American frame of mind most likely to derail the Bush administration in Iraq. It is entirely possible that Grand Ayatollah Sistani will go to the mat against the Provisional Authority to ensure that the provisional government is directly elected by the people. Whatever the provocation for a fatwa, grand ayatollahs do not lightly issue opinions. Ayatollahs are, above all else, jurisconsults, who, like American judges, live by what they write. And what Sistani has written about a provisional Iraqi government is a model of concision:

> . . . the mechanism [of the American plan] to choose members of the Transitional Legislative Assembly does not guarantee the establishment of an assembly that truly represents the Iraqi people. Therefore this mechanism must be replaced with one that guarantees the aforesaid, which is "elections," so the Assembly will emanate from the desire of the Iraqi people and will represent them fairly without its legitimacy being tarnished in any way.

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As the Provisional Authority should have learned with its original, aborted plan for drafting a new Iraqi constitution, Sistani has the power to stall the political process. His power is not, as the *Washington Post* inaccurately put it, just one man's. His authority comes from the voluntary assent of the Shiite community. The old Shiite order in Iraq, where Shiite tribal leaders, *sayyids* (descendants of the Prophet), and, most important, Shiite merchants provided countervailing forces to the influence of the great divines, is long gone, blown away by the Hashemite Sunni monarchy, military dictatorship, and finally and most effectively, the Baath party and Saddam Hussein. For many, probably most Iraqi Shiites, Sistani is the saving remnant of the old Shiite identity. He, unlike the returned exiles, endured in Iraq. He is the last of the great transnational Shiite clerics. Born in Iran, educated in Iran and Iraq, he embodies the undefeated spirit of his flock. Virtually everything else in the Iraqi Shiite world was crushed.

There is no doubt that Sistani does not want to pick a fight with the Americans. His clerical aides have repeatedly made this clear. However, Ambassador Bremer's determination to move forward with an unelected transitional legislative assembly collides with Iraqi Shiite history. The Shiites have been, in their eyes, repeatedly denied political prominence in society appropriate to their numbers and accomplishments. Iraqi Sunnis like to remember the Hashemite monarchy (1921-1958) as a democratic Iraqi golden age. It was certainly a more humane, civilized moment, but for the Shiites, especially the Shiite clergy, it was not a memorably democratic period. The Hashemites methodically denied the Shiites influence in parliament, maintaining with British help the old Ottoman Sunni-dominated power structure. They circumscribed the influence of the Shiite clergy, and halted the enormously successful conversion of Sunni tribes to Shiism. And after the Hashemites, things only got worse.

For many, probably most Iraqi Shiites, Sistani is the saving remnant of the old Shiite identity. He is the last of the great transnational clerics.

Bremer's plan plays on memories of decades of betrayal. The plan is seen in Iraq and in Washington as an explicit attempt to limit Shiite influence, which would inevitably be greater through open elections. The Provisional Authority and the Pentagon are understandably concerned about finding a means to vest the minority Sunni Arab community in a post-Saddam Iraq. The plan for a nonelected government is, in part, an effort to enlist as quickly as possible greater Sunni support for a new post-Saddam order. If you can win the hearts and minds of the Sunni Arabs, so the theory goes, you can likely diminish the palpable fear and sympathy among the Sunnis for the Baathist reactionaries and holy warriors who are, with increasing effectiveness, killing Americans and Iraqis. At a minimum, more Sunnis in power might improve the chances of gaining battle-ready intelligence against the insurrectionists. The Pentagon's and the Central Intelligence Agency's decision to use the former exile organization, the Iraqi National Accord, as the basis for a new domestic Iraqi intelligence-and-security service is part of Washington's and the Provisional Authority's new "pro-Sunni" push. Though headed by a secular Shiite, the Accord is a well-known repository of former Sunni military officers.

But this is not a wise way to enhance Shiite confidence (and it won't in all probability do much for the Sunni in the street, either). Ambassador Bremer's decision, which he now apparently regrets, to disband the Iraqi Army was unquestionably his finest order. To most Iraqi Shiites, this meant that the Sunni Baathist officer corps was never coming back. The Americans would not try to bribe the old order for "peace." The Pentagon's and the CIA's recent decision to rebuild an Iraqi intelligence service through the Accord could not thus be more poorly timed and planned. The INA has been working with the CIA for years. Its track record for producing first-rate, actionable intelligence is not encouraging. It is highly doubtful that the gain in intelligence from this new service will be worth the symbolism and honor lost among ordinary Iraqis, especially among the Shiites. The Shiite-American alliance—on which all hinges in Iraq—can snap if only a small number of Shiites grow fearful about America's intentions. Working with Baathists, which is a long-standing predilection in certain offices of the State Department, the CIA, and, more recently, among some American military field commanders, is an efficient way to kick the Iraqi conspiracy machine into high gear. And conspiracy theories in Iraq, as elsewhere in the Middle East, are often far harder than facts.

The CPA and the Bush administration obviously believe that democracy now is unworkable. The growing violence in Iraq, many officials fear, would enormously complicate and delay national elections. They also fear, though they don't like to say so publicly, that elections now might empower illiberal forces and give the Shiite clergy—especially Sistani—a potential veto

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over the nation's future. More than a few fear that Sistani will want, in some shape and form, an "Islamic government," an Iraqi version of clerical Iran. The Sunni Kurds might also find the whole thing offensive, and decamp from the nation. Arab Sunnis could just grow angrier and more violent.

All of these feared outcomes are possible. But the Bush administration's plan for Iraq does not, in any meaningful way, preclude them. Two years' time will not make Iraqis philosophically more ready for democracy than they are today. Iraqi culture isn't going to change to fit America's schedule. It ought to be obvious that the Shiites as a group, and the clergy in particular, are much more likely to entertain nondemocratic sentiments toward their fellow citizenry if for two years they are denied the vote. In theory, elections for a constitutional convention won't happen until March 15, 2005, national elections until December 31, 2005. If the administration really believes the "hearts and minds" argument about counterinsurgency, doesn't it make more sense to begin the election process sooner, not later, so that a new class of national Iraqi politicians can develop?

Hand-picked provincial officials and self-selecting local "notables" can't possibly have the traction of would-be politicians constantly pressing the flesh. Don't we *want* the Iraqis to get excited about determining their own destiny? Don't we want this sooner, not later? Shouldn't we find out sooner, not later, whether the Arab Sunnis as a group want to participate in a democratic process? Ditto for the Kurds? Does the administration really think that six months down the road the violence in the Sunni belt is going to diminish? That holding peaceful elections will indeed be any easier then than now? Are we going to allow Sunni reactionaries and foreign jihadists to hold hostage national elections?

And suppose the Sunni insurgents take the war south into the Shiite zone. Remember the bombs of August when Washington and Baghdad panicked, fearing the two-front nightmare scenario had arrived? Isn't it a better idea to have the Shiites fully on board, committed to participatory democracy? Do we want to see bombs going off in Najaf, Karbala, or Hilla and an increasing number of Shiites arguing that the Americans, who deny them democracy, also deny them security? Shouldn't we assume a worst-case scenario, that we've got an incipient Sunni insurrection on our hands? Don't we want to see whether the Sunnis will go to the ballot booth? If they do, won't they be more inclined to join us in the arduous and ugly counterinsurgency campaign to root out the guerrillas-cum-terrorists? Don't we want the Shiites and the Kurds to back us and themselves morally through the ballot box for the difficult and bloody campaign that may lie ahead?

At present, we still have Ali Sistani on our side. The old man is a product of the most politically skeptical and cautious grand ayatollahs of the last 50 years, Sayyid Abu'l-Qasim Kho'i and Hajj Hosayn Borujerdi. Sistani's fatwas on elections and his pithy commentary on the role of Islam in society have been consistently moderate. The absence of Islamically loaded language in his political commentary is indeed striking. And grand ayatollahs are as they appear: They are not masters of deception (as are others in the Shiite tradition). Their minds and manners evolve openly over decades.

Does this moderation mean that Sistani believes in a secular society, with a firm wall between religion and state? Certainly not. But he and his clerical lieutenants clearly understand how combustible Iraq is. They know that Shiites, let alone Arab Sunnis and Kurds, are a variegated lot. Sistani's followers have been explicit in their disapproval of the clerical dictatorship in neighboring Iran. They don't like clerics intertwined with politics. Sistani and his men have so far made it clear that they believe the commonweal, not a cleric interpreting the holy law, holds ultimate political power. The Sistani crowd is certainly more moderate than the Shiites of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq and the Dawa party, whom the Coalition Provisional Authority has grown too fond of. (That SCIRI and Dawa representatives serve as important channels for the CPA to Sistani is bizarre.) And the grand ayatollah has so far shown great sensitivity toward Sunni fears of Shiite predominance. He has not allowed his dispossessed followers to take back the mosques that were stolen from them after the '91 rebellion. To put it succinctly: We are enormously lucky to have Sistani in post-Saddam Iraq. If the old cleric were to die, our position among the Shiites might collapse overnight. Our objective with the grand ayatollah thus ought to be to cooperate (and preempt), not confront.

If the Bush administration is wise, it will change its provisional-government plans and allow for direct elections as soon as feasible. If it refuses to change, and Sistani and the Shiites force it to abort the plan later, we will be left weaker than if we change now. We ought not dissipate our strength so profligately. There will undoubtedly be moments where we will need to intimidate. Dealing with Muslim clerics has, understandably, never been an American strong suit. Though many in the CPA and the administration may want to wish Sistani away, fortunately they can't. He is America's most powerful democratic weapon in Iraq, even if we don't know how to wield him. If President Bush is reelected in 2004, however, Grand Ayatollah Sistani will have certainly done his part. ♦

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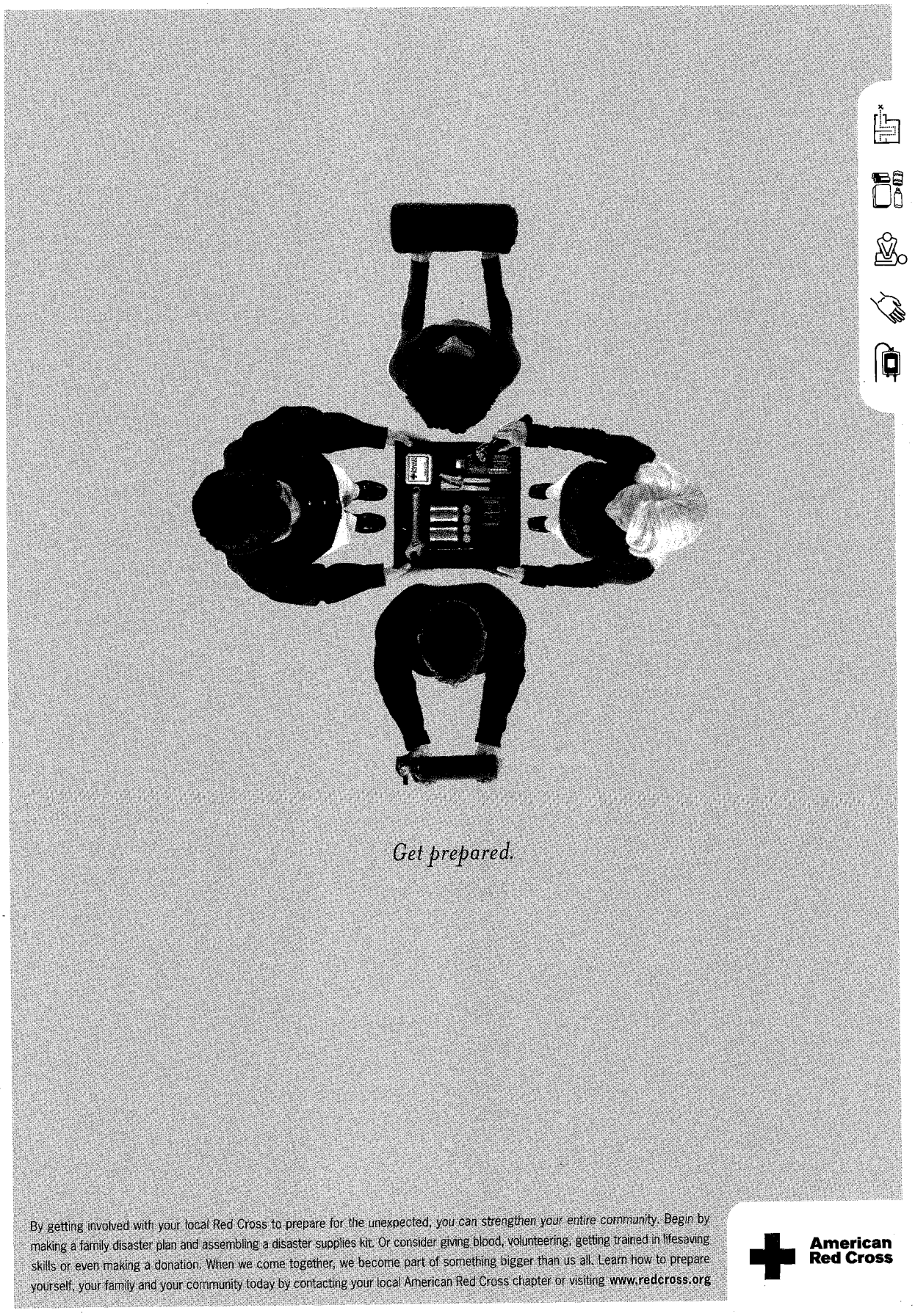

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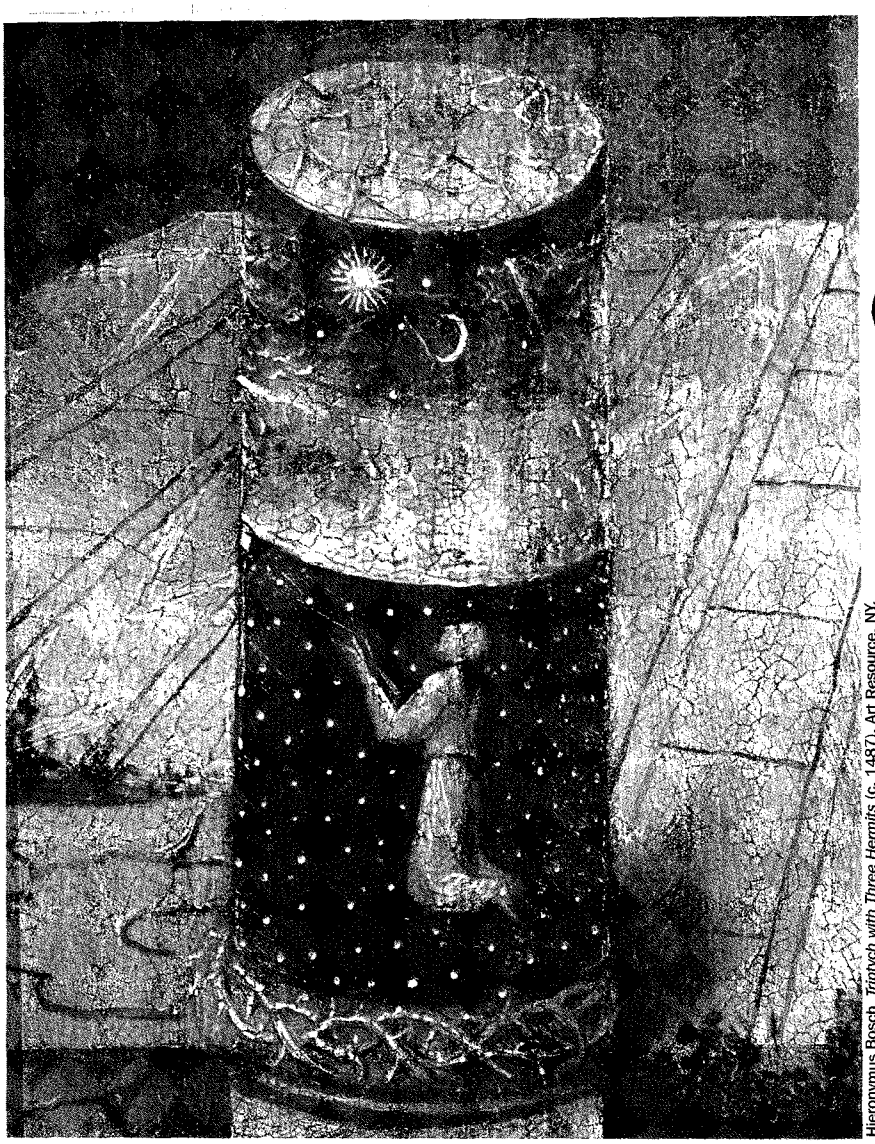
Liberty, Equality, Eugenics

By Christine Rosen



Hieronymus Bosch, *Triptych with Three Hermits* (c. 1487). Art Resource, NY.

This ought to be a welcome contribution to contemporary bioethical debates—a book, written by a well-regarded historian of science and published by a prestigious academic press, that engages the history of embryo research, stem cell research, and cloning, while promising to tackle the contentious issue of when life begins.

Unfortunately, *Whose View of Life?* doesn't deliver on its promise. Jane Maienschein—a historian of developmental biology at Arizona State University who served as a science adviser to Arizona Republican congressman Matt Salmon—does well enough describing the fascinating, early history of embryology. But when she wades into the ethical and political challenges posed by contemporary embryo research, she proves far less interesting. The tone of the book is set by its beginning, with President Bush's August 2001 address about limitations on stem cell research. How, Maienschein peevishly asks, can "a self-proclaimed mediocre student and no particular fan of academic research" like Bush be "in the position to decide what science the National Institutes of Health would be allowed to fund"?

By page three, Maienschein's answer to the question of when life begins has become clear. In high dudgeon she describes people who believe that life begins at conception as "extreme advocates" and "absolutists," while those who believe that "a life emerges only gradually" are described as holding "reasoned interpretations." Within a few pages she has produced a little girl with diabetes who "worries that powerful senators like Sam Brownback are in the position to outlaw the stem cell and therapeutic cloning research that she believes is her best chance at a cure and at her survival." "It's like he's killing me," the girl tells Maienschein. Maienschein is fascinated by the history of our earliest attempts to study the beginnings of human life, and the book abounds with enthusiastic descriptions of embryology's pioneers: Nicolaas Hartsoeker and his seventeenth-century vision of early life—a "preformationist homunculus" that looks like a tiny alien with a bagel for a head, crouched inside its mother's womb—and Marcello Malpighi painstakingly cracking open chicken eggs to study the developing chicks.

Maienschein is keen on arguing that this history teaches lessons for contemporary debates, and it's true that many of our current discussions about biotechnology need a deeper knowledge of the past. All too often, however, Maienschein applies her history selectively, as an ethical balm and as justification for her own views.

Whose View of Life?
Embryos, Cloning, and Stem Cells
by Jane Maienschein
Harvard University Press, 368 pp., $27.95

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Looking at current debates through a historical lens, she argues, lets us see that "competing interpretations of life" have always existed. "By viewing current claims of moral truth in historical perspective, we can defuse the efficacy of the argument—even if not the passion of the arguer. . . . History can show that we are not on the brink of some new type of danger that we have never encountered before."

This is not entirely convincing considering the history she explores. In her discussion of the early birth-control movement, for example, Maienschein portrays Margaret Sanger as a fearless crusader for women. Left unmentioned is the fact that Sanger was also an ardent eugenicist whose lobbying group, the American Birth Control League, frequently joined forces with the nation's major eugenics organizations.

Indeed, Maienschein's own treatment of the eugenics movement contains warnings that she might consider heeding when it comes to contemporary embryo research. "Eugenics seemed to make perfectly good sense," Maienschein writes. In a society dominated by "hereditarian thinking," Americans thought eugenics was "good policy based on good science." Today, of course, "we ought to have learned not to make similar mistakes." Chastened by our experience in the past, Maienschein argues, we can be even more certain that the good policies based on good science we pursue today are ethically sound.

But can we? It is at least worth considering how our children and grandchildren might eventually view embryo research, and how they might judge our society, which is currently dominated by a somewhat different, though no less dangerous, way of thinking than extreme hereditarianism: an intoxicating desire to expand the reach of our science and technology not merely to study or cure, but to improve, to enhance, and to transform human life.

Worse than selective history is Maienschein's thinly disguised contempt for people who do not share her own view of life as a process that should be subject to our most extreme technological manipulations. This is clearest in her treatment of Catholics. Popes past and present are treated with disdain. "Evidently, Pope Pius IX did not need to know more about reproduction and development to proclaim the Catholic Church's official position on the beginning of life," she sniffs while describing the 1869 encyclical *Apostolicae Sedis*. But her animosity toward religion is ecumenical; describing President Bush's stem-cell speech, she says, "In a country founded on separation of church and state, it is not clear why it is prayer that should guide an American president to policy decisions about bioscience."

Similarly, Maienschein praises the Supreme Court's decision in *Roe* v. *Wade* and offers positive words for abortion activists while describing opponents of abortion as intransigent potential murderers, a group that holds "their particular values as absolute and immutable, without possibility of compromise" and that has "become more vocal and even violent." Although she praises bioethicists like Arthur Caplan, whose views she shares, she impugns those she does not. "Theologians-turned-bioethicists" are deemed "not seriously willing to engage in reflection about the difficult challenges of sorting out right and wrong," and Leon Kass, the chairman of the President's Council on Bioethics, is dismissed as someone who "relies heavily on his own intuitions, on his assumptions that our intuitions will match his and that if they do not match there is something wrong with us."

In *Whose View of Life?* Maienschein founders primarily because the lessons she draws from history are too freighted with her own political views, and her bias in contemporary debates is too thorough to allow a fair-minded discussion of embryo research, stem-cell research, and cloning. As a result, her recommendations for how we can better grapple with these difficult issues fall flat. Her constant refrain—"Nature evolves, science evolves, social attitudes evolve, and our responses should be expected to evolve"—should be answered: Yes, they do. But not always for the better. ♦

A Natural Poet

The unjustly neglected John Clare.

BY SUSAN BALÉE

The early nineteenth-century John Clare is the best English poet that hardly anyone reads. Or so, at least, contends Jonathan Bate, whose *John Clare: A Biography* has recently appeared, along with a new edition of poems by the Romantic poet: *"I Am": The Selected Poetry of John Clare*. Bate, a distinguished Shakespeare scholar, claims to have discovered Clare through a love of nature poetry and his interest in the link between creativity and madness.

Susan Balée is writing the gallery guide to the Barnes Foundation's art collection.

He spent five years with Clare's copious literary remains and decided to act on his conviction that "John Clare is the one major English poet never to have received a biography worthy of his memory."

Born in 1793, Clare was a farm laborer who grew up in grinding poverty. He was the village oddity—a boy who revered learning, who preferred time alone with a book or long solitary rambles in nature. When he came to national attention in 1820 for his first collection, *Poems, Descriptive of Rural Life and Scenery*, his publishers lauded him as the English "peasant" poet,

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the counterpart of Scotland's Robert Burns.

It both helped and hurt Clare's reputation to be labeled a "peasant savant"—just as it both helped and hurt his reputation to be known as a "mad poet" when, later, stress unhinged his mind and he was committed to a lunatic asylum. He seemed a two-trick pony: a fellow who dashed off a few good verses despite the dirt under his fingernails and the demons beneath his brow. His most commonly anthologized poem, "Lines: I Am," written in the Northampton General Lunatic Asylum, begins:

I am—yet what I am, none cares or knows;
My friends forsake me like a memory lost:
I am the self-consumer of my woes—
They rise and vanish in oblivion's host
Like shadows in love-frenzied stifled throes—
And yet I am and live—like vapours tossed.

Like the other Romantics, Clare glorified the Individual—even this individual who cannot name himself. And like them, Clare celebrated childhood's innocence. Many of his poems are about memory and loss, intimations of mortality, the marvels of the natural landscape. He also captured the folk songs and tales of his region before they disappeared and enshrined the vernacular speech of his time and place. His poems crackle with local dialect: "pooty" means "snail shell," "crizzle" is "freeze," "flaze" is a smoky flame.

As woods were razed and the open fields around him enclosed by landowners, Clare rushed to record nature as he knew it before the fences went up. As his friends the gypsies were driven from their traditional camping grounds, Clare jotted down their stories and recorded their songs (a fiddler, he also taught himself how to write music). And the result is that his poems do capture the landscape. Indeed, he noted that John Keats, like "other inhabitants of great cities, often described nature as she appeared to his fancies and not as he would have described her had he witnessed the things he described." Clare's own "The Nightingale's Nest" thus offers a naturalist's counterpoint to Keats's mythologically inspired "Ode to a Nightingale."

Jonathan Bate argues that "the art of noticing was one of Clare's principal poetic gifts." A shepherd-boy looks up at the wild geese gabbling overhead and *He marks the figured forms in which they fly / And pausing, follows with a wondering eye, / Likening their curious march in curves or rows / To every letter which his memory knows*. Birds, fens, harvest suppers, haymaking, cowslips, and orchids populate Clare's work, their joys ceaselessly lamented, as in "Childhood":

When we look back on what we were
And feel what we are now,
A fading leaf is not so drear
Upon a broken bough,
A winter seat without a fire,
A cold world without friends
Doth not such chilly glooms impart
As that one word portends.

Poor Clare grew increasingly alienated from his childhood, his homeplace, and himself as he grew older. While a boy, he began working full-time—first as a farm laborer, later as a lime-burner. What money he earned had to support his parents and sister because of his father's rheumatism. His compensations he found first in nature, and then in women and alcohol. He retained an idealized image of a schoolgirl, Mary Joyce, whom he could never hope to marry. Late in his life, in the Northampton Asylum, he believed he was actually married to her as well as his real wife, Patty. He also believed he was Lord Byron (and wrote catchy, lewd revisions of "Don Juan" and "Childe Harold") and a prize fighter.

John Clare
A Biography
by Jonathan Bate
Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 672 pp., $40

"I Am"
The Selected Poetry of John Clare
edited by Jonathan Bate
Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 344 pp., $17

Farrar, Straus and Giroux

John Clare was something of a nine-days' wonder in England after his first book of poems; by the time his three other—and better—collections appeared, no one cared much anymore about the untutored genius. Rousseau's "noble savage" had disappeared with the forests, Shelley and Byron were dead by the mid-1820s, and, anyway, poetry had fallen out of fashion, plowed under by the novel. Clare was weighted down with cares—he'd married his pregnant girlfriend and moved her into his parents' cottage; his poetry earned little, and, despite the help of literary friends, he still had to work as a manual laborer to feed his family, which ultimately grew to include a half-dozen children.

One of his aristocratic patrons set his family up in a better cottage some miles away from his homeplace of Helpston. The house was bigger, cleaner, better ventilated, and it had a garden, but leaving the village of his birth for a hostile new village (the locals resented the lord's giving Clare the renovated cottage) only deepened Clare's depression. By 1834, blue devils became his constant companions. He began to see evil spirits around him and to believe that his family was bewitched. His brains felt like they were boiling, while his limbs burned. Sometimes he could not leave the cot-

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tage; other times manic energy consumed him and he wrote reams of sonnets. A characteristic one, about a badger hunted by dogs, runs:

He falls as dead and kicked by boys and men
Then starts and grins and drives the crowd again
Till kicked and torn and beaten out he lies
And leaves his hold and cackles, groans, and dies.

In 1837, he was committed to an asylum, for his own welfare and that of his family. Happily for John Clare, during his era "Moral Treatment" was the new philosophy of mental care. In the two asylums where he spent the rest of his life (with the exception of a few months when he escaped and walked home to his family), warm baths, good food, and cozy rooms with fireplaces were the norm for less-afflicted patients like Clare. Clare also enjoyed the privilege of walking out in the nearby woods and to local villages; he could also work in the asylum gardens, read, write, and play ball games or chess.

Although he missed home desperately and sex particularly, his physical health blossomed. Nor was he without intellectual companionship—other writers and artists were "guests" at his asylum, including, for a few months, the young Alfred Tennyson. He lived until 1864, a plump, ruddy-cheeked fellow, known in the village of Northampton as a poet who was happy to write poems for money, a quid of tobacco, or a pint of ale.

So, why should we care about him now? Not because he was a peasant poet. There were several of them at the time; it was the vogue early in the nineteenth century, and, anyway, Robert Burns has that niche locked up. And not because he was a mad poet. There were several of those at the time, as well, and Christopher Smart seems to be the acknowledged champion of that era's fascination for the poetry of the insane asylum.

No, Clare deserves reading mostly because he was the best nature poet of his era. As Bate puts it, "Clare knew his environment with a lived intimacy that sets him apart from well-born pastoral poets." Precisely because our age celebrates nature writing, Clare should fare better now than he did in his own day.

And what is Life? An hourglass on the run,
A mist retreating from the morning sun,
A busy bustling still repeated dream.
Its length? A minute's pause, a moment's thought.
And happiness? A bubble on the stream
That in the act of seizing shrinks to nought.

Bate is right that to read such poems is to see that John Clare is a major Romantic who belongs beside Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, and Keats. ♦

School Girls

What's the point of same-sex education?

BY NAOMI SCHAEFER

In *The Miseducation of Women*, British education professor James Tooley writes that as a young man, he decided to go off to teach in Zimbabwe. When his girlfriend expressed interest in coming along, she was quickly admonished by friends for not having her own ambitions, but simply wishing to follow her man. "How convenient it all was for me, not to have to consider her well-being. That was our feminism. It relieved me of any responsibility for thinking of her as a woman with different needs and desires than mine."

The Miseducation of Women
by James Tooley
Ivan R. Dee, 258 pp., $14.95

All Girls
Single Sex Education and Why It Matters
by Karen Stabiner
Riverhead, 353 pp., $14

These different needs and desires, Tooley argues, arose biologically. Drawing mostly on the just-so stories of evolutionary psychology, Tooley attributes the superior abilities of men in mathematics, for example, to the role of males in the Pleistocene period as hunters. Citing another scholar, he explains, "The vast spatial measures showing male bias (e.g., mental rotations, map reading, maze learning) correspond to attributes that would enable successful hunting."

Tooley also provides evolutionary reasons for the areas in which women excel. In fact, he questions the entire notion that human beings were ever living in a real "patriarchy," claiming that many of men's traits evolved as a result of women's desires.

But Tooley has not undertaken this project because he thinks women should return to their natural state. Instead, he argues that women are unhappy because they have been forced by feminists to give up being wives and mothers in order to compete with men in the workplace. Women may have more educational, job, and even athletic opportunities than ever before, but by the time they reach the age of thirty or so, career and independence are hardly enough to make them contented.

Here Tooley makes entertaining use of his knowledge of feminist literature. As it turns out, nearly everyone in this camp has noted the problem. Here, for instance, is a passage from Betty Friedan: "I'm haunted by the women I work with who are thirty and thirty-five and not having children or are torn to the core about it."

And here is Simone de Beauvoir, extolling the joys of motherhood: "The mother murmurs almost a lover's words, and like a lover, she makes avid use of the possessive case; she employs the same gestures of possession: caresses, kisses; she hugs the child to her bosom, she keeps him warm in her arms and in her bed."

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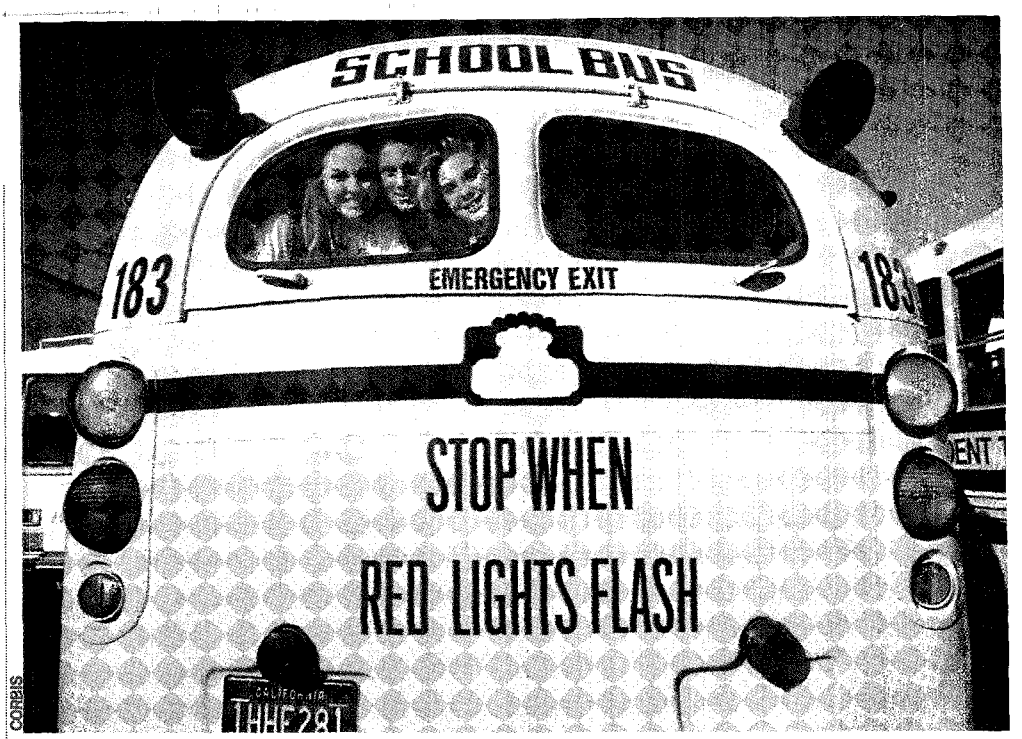

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Noting that many of today's feminist voices—those who don't want women to be just like men, but want women to be respected for what they are good at and what makes them happy—are being ignored, Tooley proposes revaluing "domesticity." He writes of his own sort of awakening on this issue, "I was struck by incredulity that anyone could think that the world of work, politics, sport or whatever—even being an astronaut or President of the USA—could possibly compensate for the loss of any of this mystery and magic" of motherhood. Given the dismal state in which Tooley finds modern womanhood, his recommendations are surprisingly timid. Aside from not pushing women to take advanced math classes and not fretting when they marry early, Tooley offers almost no substantive solutions.

One option may be the return of single-sex education. But, as Karen Stabiner's smartly reported book, *All Girls: Single-Sex Education and Why It Matters*, explains, girls' schools these days are doing all they can to help their students compete with boys—on traditionally male terms.

The girls at the Marlborough School, a 112-year-old private school in Los Angeles (one of two that Stabiner profiles) are encouraged to take as many advanced math and science courses as possible. As Stabiner writes, "Although 44 percent of undergraduate math majors were women, the number dwindled to 24 percent at the graduate level. . . . Opponents of girls' schools blamed it on the social pressure to defer when boys were around as well as on the enduring assumption that girls were not good at numbers."

Indeed, at Marlborough, the teachers try to ensure that women overcome whatever social pressures or natural inclinations may exist. In history and literature classes, teachers try to get the girls to contribute more to discussion by giving each student a certain number of chips at the beginning of class, and asking her to give up one every time she makes a comment or answers a question. The chips must be used by the end of class, and no student can talk once she has used all her chips. Girls at Marlborough are supposed to leave with the confidence to compete in a man's world.

There are a few teachers at Marlborough who might be interested in Tooley's message that girls' strengths differ from boys'. Myranda Marsh, for instance, came to Marlborough "intending to revolutionize the history department." Marsh doesn't think that girls excel at memorization, and so she favors a more "cooperative" learning environment. Ultimately, though, readers of Stabiner's book will conclude that the graduates of Marlborough will finish looking very much as though they had gone to a co-ed prep school.

The same cannot be said for the girls at The Young Women's Leadership School in Harlem, the other institution Stabiner describes. The school opened a few years ago, to the great disappointment of NOW and the ACLU, which believe single-sex education backward and discriminatory. It tries to take girls from poor inner-city families and turn them into college material, an uphill battle in a school system where fewer than 50 percent of students graduate from high school in four years and 30 percent never finish at all.

Longer school days, larger workloads, and the threat of dismissal are perhaps the easiest part of the equation for the girls at the school. Stabiner suggests the hardest tests for them come in the form of peer pressure. For these young women, a single-sex education means less time wasted on the high-school soap opera, less of a chance to get pregnant, and a sense that there is something more in store for them than the hoodlums their sisters are dating. (Stabiner usefully introduces readers to the families of these young women.) In the case of the girls at the leadership school, their only chance for making it out of a world of poverty and violence is to compete in the world of men. It doesn't matter whether they find it more or less fulfilling than domestic life. Statistics show it's usually the women in poor minority communities who are picking themselves up and leaving.

Stabiner's book provides a stark picture of how the arguments regarding the role and education of women tend to break down along class lines now. Tooley quotes scholar Carolyn Graglia as saying, "Feminism's war against the housewife has pitted the best educated, most sophisticated, most aggressive, and most masculinized portion of the female population against women who generally possess less education, less worldly experience, who are more likely to be docile than aggressive, feminine than masculine."

Ironically, it may be only through a system of single-sex education, in which women are taught to act more like men, that these poorer women can win the right for their daughters to be stay-at-home mothers. ♦

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Feet of Clay

The novelist Colson Whitehead is not the colossus he once seemed. BY TIM MARCHMAN

Colson Whitehead begins his new collection of essays on New York, "I'm here because I was born here and thus ruined for anywhere else"—and the entire book sustains both the false humility and the civic narcissism implicit in that line. Each of the essays in *The Colossus of New York* is centered on a small part of the city—Coney Island, say, or Broadway, or the downtown F train at rush hour—and composed of fleeting impressions and imputed beliefs.

The Colossus of New York
A City in Thirteen Parts
by Colson Whitehead
Doubleday, 158 pp., $19.95

Here, for example, is Manhattan in the rain: "From block to block the people display an assortment of strides, every station between a walk and a run. Each has a personal strategy of how best to move in this. The best of them gave up long ago." This sounds nice enough. It is certainly moody, especially the last line. But what is it describing? And why is it being described? Whitehead believes that New Yorkers in the rain are inherently interesting, merely because New York is the place where they're getting rained on.

Unfortunately, he's wrong. Both the great solidity of the city and the specificity of each passing stranger dissolve in Whitehead's hands, and all that remains is a mass of people compressed into pointless abstraction. There is something contemptuous about it. Not a passage in *The Colossus of New York* would allow someone who had never been to New York to envision it; not a passage would tell them what it is like to feel anything but the cold weariness of a man who's lived in one place his whole life and is too overwhelmed to say anything about it.

The sense of dislocation, of the city as a place that grows less knowable the longer one stays in it, was perhaps the best-realized element of Whitehead's wonderful first novel, *The Intuitionist*. In that 1999 book, vaguely situated in a place that was not quite New York, he made literature of a pulp notion of the unreal city. And yet, evocative descriptions such as those found in *The Intuitionist*, unallied either to narrative or a specific idea, prove far too insubstantial to form what Whitehead needs to make a nonfiction account like *The Colossus of New York* an interesting read.

This is Whitehead's second book since *The Intuitionist*, which was successful commercially as well as artistically and clearly marked him as a writer not only of achievement and considerable promise, but one concerned with character and story. His second novel, the 2001 *John Henry Days*, was a failure, however, and for much the same reason that *The Colossus of New York* is a failure: because its author chose rhetoric and preciosity over narrative. In *John Henry Days*, Whitehead unsuccessfully attempted to link the empty life of a hack freelancer living in Brooklyn to the myth of John Henry. Still, readers were willing to allow Whitehead some credit. The book was messy and uncontained, but it was wonderful in parts, and there are worse kinds of books for promising young novelists to write than overambitious ones.

The Colossus of New York makes *John Henry Days* seem more troublesome. *The Intuitionist* was as good as it was because Whitehead was able to embody alienation in experiences unlike his own. That book was not about a writer but an elevator inspector, not about a man but a woman, and the place was not New York, but a city. In regressing from the imagined experience of a person unlike himself to that of a person noticeably resembling him, Whitehead is tracing a path toward his own personality rather than toward the world. This is not encouraging, especially for a writer in whom great hopes are invested.

Occasionally Whitehead delivers a good line or two in *The Colossus of New York*: "He has that wish again: that every step he ever took left a neon footprint. Every step, from his first to these. That way he could catch up with himself, track himself through city and years."

But these are rare. The effect Whitehead is trying to achieve was actually caught by James Agee at the beginning of "Southeast of the Island: Travel Notes," his 1939 essay about Brooklyn: "Watching them in the trolleys, or along the inexhaustible reduplications of the streets of their small tradings and their sleep, one comes to notice, even in the most urgently poor, a curious quality in the eyes and at the corners of the mouths, relative to what is seen on Manhattan Island: a kind of drugged softness or narcotic relaxation. . . . If there were not Manhattan, there could not be this Brooklyn look; for truly to appreciate what one escapes, it must be not only distant but near at hand. Only: all escapes are relative, and bestow their own peculiar forms of bondage."

James Agee was not a New Yorker by birth, and he saw things with the unfamiliarity that may be necessary for grasping truths about the city. What do they know of New York, who only New Yorkers know? Not enough, if *The Colossus of New York* is any guide, which is a shame. Colson Whitehead is a writer of sufficient talent and ambition to write well about the streets of Gotham, if only he can find a way to make himself a Columbus of the near-at-hand. ♦

Tim Marchman is a lifelong resident of Brooklyn and a regular contributor to the New York Sun.

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General Assembly

The inauspicious beginnings of the United Nations.

BY MARIO LOYOLA

Barely three weeks after the attack on Pearl Harbor, twenty-six countries, calling themselves the "United Nations," pledged to act in concert "against savage and brutal forces seeking to subjugate the world." As the alliance gathered its armies together, the technical planning for a postwar international organization had already quietly begun.

Act of Creation
The Founding of the United Nations: A Story of Superpowers, Secret Agents, Wartime Allies and Enemies, and Their Quest for a Peaceful World
by Stephen C. Schlesinger
Westview, 374 pp., $27.50

President Franklin D. Roosevelt was deeply committed to the idea from the start. He believed the economic depression and world war that dominated his presidency were yoked phenomena: With illiberal economic policies and unilateral disarmament, the isolationist democracies of the West had invited both poverty and war. He became dedicated to the idea of a permanent military alliance, one that would keep the peace in a world of liberalized international commerce. It was a "practical necessity," he decided, to recast the League of Nations on this much more ambitious scale—and to make it work.

The strength of the president's conviction drove the project through the whole process of technical study and international negotiations up to the spring of 1945, when the proposals were presented at an international conference of the anti-Axis alliance in San Francisco. But Roosevelt died only a few days before the start of the conference, leaving his brainchild to an uncertain future just before its birth.

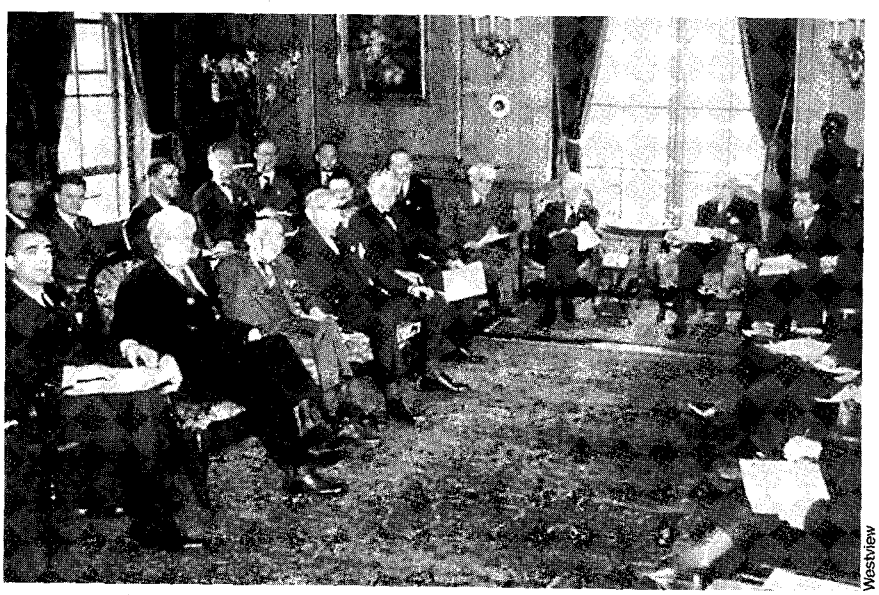
Mario Loyola is a writer and attorney in Washington, D.C.

It is here that Stephen Schlesinger's *Act of Creation* picks up the tale, guiding readers through the remarkable months-long process of negotiation and ratification necessary for creating the modern United Nations. Providing background through episodic flashbacks on the key American players, Schlesinger weaves together a tale that often reads more like a novel than a work of history. He thus succeeds in humanizing a study that could have easily drowned in technical detail.

One learns, for example, of Soviet foreign minister Molotov's first encounter with President Truman. Indignant over the subjugation of Poland, Truman delivered an angry warning and then summarily dismissed him. "I have never been talked to like that in my life," Molotov said. Truman responded, "Carry out your agreements, and you won't get talked to like that."

What shines through most clearly in *Act of Creation* is "the unusual intellect and honest idealism" of the U.N.'s founders. As one might expect, the Americans did almost all the technical study and drafting "while neither the British, the Russians, nor the Chinese," the other sponsors of the conference, "seemed to take the preparatory work very seriously." Indeed, the Americans seem to have thought of everything, from a small army of free taxis to a library of history and international law for the delegates' use.

In some ways the most significant impact of the conference may have been psychological. The delegates were offered a cross-country trip by rail. One American observer remarked with pride that the delegates "could not miss the contrast with their ravaged countries, as they saw mile after mile of our extraordinarily productive pastures and seemingly endless fields, punctuated by mighty industrial cities and prospering towns." Clearly, the Americans wanted to give the other delegations a vision of what was possible in a realm based on the peaceful rule of law. And the crowning touch was San Francisco itself. A British official remembered: "I had flown straight



Westview

The "Big Five" meet in San Francisco's Fairmont Hotel, May 29, 1945.

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from blackened-out London into a fantastic world of glitter and light and extravagant parties and food and drink and constantly spiraling talk." *Act of Creation* evokes perhaps better than any other book the energy and idealism with which the delegates undertook their project that hopeful spring.

Yet it was there in San Francisco that the signs of serious trouble first became apparent. It emerges quite clearly from this account that Stalin entered the conference with the single-minded purpose of "protecting his own security interests." The Soviet delegation threatened time and again to derail the conference over points of contention that were minor, sometimes even incomprehensible—only to give in to the Americans at the last minute. With each artificial "victory" in the conference, the increasingly self-satisfied Americans increasingly forgot about Poland. In the end Russia would leave San Francisco with exactly what she wanted: a veto on the Security Council and half of Europe behind the Iron Curtain.

The Americans faced a terrible dilemma. If they insisted on holding Stalin to his promises on Poland, they risked losing Soviet participation in the United Nations, thereby compromising the universality of the organization—and in any case, they couldn't save Poland.

On the other hand, to permit Stalin to renege on his guarantees of Polish independence and establish a totalitarian police state throughout Eastern Europe was to defeat Roosevelt's central purpose of a worldwide alliance against tyranny and to set the worst possible precedent for the future.

One cannot know what Roosevelt would have done. But Averell Harriman, one of his closest advisers, then ambassador to the Soviet Union and later governor of New York, was not prepared to sell Poland out, and thought the conference could go on well enough without the Soviets.

Truman, however, had different priorities. He was not about to let inevitable Soviet imperialism intrude on his "Parliament of Man." Truman thought himself a realist but was in many ways a supreme idealist: He was devoted to the nascent World Government, and it wouldn't be complete without the Soviets. Thus was born the United Nations.

Westview

Foreign ministers at the first plenary session: Russia's Molotov, America's Stettinius, and Britain's Ed

The enormous attention paid to the crises manufactured by the Soviet delegation was unfortunate for other reasons as well. Some proposals, such as a mechanism for periodic review of the charter in a general conference, were sloppily dismissed without getting anything like the attention they deserved.

Others were adopted far too hastily, such as an Australian amendment that arguably made the Security Council an exclusive rather than supplementary mechanism for the preemptive use of force, a reckless last minute change that is proving fatal to the organization's central purpose, "the prevention and removal of threats to the peace." These hasty decisions were all the more unfortunate as the charter emerged from San Francisco with all the aura of a Magna Carta.

In his September speech to the General Assembly, Kofi Annan evoked "the group of far-sighted leaders" who created the United Nations. Then he delivered to the assembled heads of state and government a remarkable admonition: "Now we must decide whether it is possible to continue on the basis agreed then, or whether radical changes are needed. And we must not shy away from questions about the adequacy, and effectiveness, of the rules and instruments at our disposal." The most important of those questions should be: How well is this arrangement serving the purposes for which it was devised?

In reviving the heady times of the San Francisco Conference, *Act of Creation* offers a glimpse of what those purposes were. It is a somewhat romanticized account, exalting the idealism of the "far-sighted leaders" who launched the great experiment. But that idealism, in one important sense, is a danger to itself. The charter is not holy writ, and treating it so risks making it irrelevant or worse.

Despite its epic-sounding name, the United Nations is merely a set of "rules and instruments at our disposal" and particularly at the disposal of our diplomats. Addressing the many "questions about its adequacy and effectiveness" with a realistic sense of the organization's purposes and limitations will be vital to an act of creation that, in the most hopeful view, remains unfinished. ♦

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Carl Henry, 1913-2003

When historians chronicle the late-twentieth-century resurgence of evangelicalism, they will focus on two figures: the charismatic preacher Billy Graham, whose 1949 tent crusade in Los Angeles launched his worldwide ministry, and the gentle, self-effacing Carl F.H. Henry, who died December 7 at age ninety.

It was Henry's 1947 book *The Uneasy Conscience of the Modern Fundamentalism* that summoned conservative Christians to return from their self-imposed exile. Early in the twentieth century, Protestant Christianity was sharply divided between those who fought for orthodoxy and those who thought orthodoxy should take a back seat to social reform. The "social-gospel" movement, led by Walter Rauschenbusch and others, placed commendable emphasis on feeding the poor, clothing the naked, and visiting prisoners. But the social-gospel movement also insisted that individual salvation was less important than changing institutions.

Rejecting this theological innovation, leaders of the orthodox wing of American Protestantism issued their famous statement of the "Five Fundamentals" of the faith—the origin of the modern use of the word "fundamentalist." And they began a systematic retreat from the culture, tragically forgetting the nineteenth-century tradition of social involvement that was typified by abolition.

As a result, many fundamentalists didn't vote, believing politics an irredeemable and dirty business. Most fundamentalists spurned intellectual pursuits for fear of being contaminated by "higher criticism" of the Bible and the universities' increasing turn against religion. Those who did place some value on higher education built their own isolated institutions—at least a hundred miles, one quipster noted, from the nearest known sin.

Carl Henry was born at the very time American Protestant Christianity was being fractured. By age nineteen, the precocious young man, son of German immigrants, was editing a weekly newspaper in New York's Nassau County. Then, through a series of seemingly unrelated events—Henry would say by God's providence—he was dramatically converted to Christ. He attended Wheaton College for his bachelor's and master's degrees, then Northern Baptist Seminary and Boston University for his doctorates.

Christianity Today

Carl Henry

Henry immediately became a rising star among the evangelicals who were searching for some way out of the trap into which the orthodox had fallen. He joined the newly organized Fuller Theological Seminary in California as acting dean. Shortly afterwards, at the behest of Billy Graham, he became editor of *Christianity Today*, a journal started in order to engage Christians once again in cultural issues.

This earned him no little animus from the fundamentalists who still thought retreat from the culture a necessity. But it was the beginning of a career that would soon help unite evangelicals. Henry was a vigorous guardian of orthodoxy, but he tirelessly exhorted the Church to do its job in society, to get back onto the mainline campuses, and to care for the poor.

Carl Henry had a hand in every event that shaped modern evangelicalism. He worked on the emergence of many key seminaries. And, with his passion for the poor, he helped with World Vision and served on the board of my own ministry, Prison Fellowship. He lectured around the world, and his many books, including his magnum opus, *God, Revelation, and Authority*, have been translated into scores of languages.

Though a tall, imposing figure, with a prodigious intellect and an intimidating depth of knowledge, Carl Henry was unfailingly humble and loving. Several times I went to Carl with questions that must have seemed pathetically immature to him. He would nonetheless patiently explain issues of great theological complexity in language I could understand.

Without taking into account Carl Henry's life and work, no one can understand America over the last fifty years—the nation's politics, intellectual battles, or cultural fights. Without Henry, no one can understand the Christians who are bringing their talent to bear in the arts and America's colleges. Without Henry, no one can understand the Christian writers who not only preach to the Christian subculture but also, as C.S. Lewis put it, "ply their trade with great excellence."

That's quite a legacy for a converted journalist. Billy Graham was God's megaphone, touching hearts. Carl Henry, patient teacher and healer, touched the mind. He lived as he taught—defending truth and overcoming evil with good.

—*Charles W. Colson*

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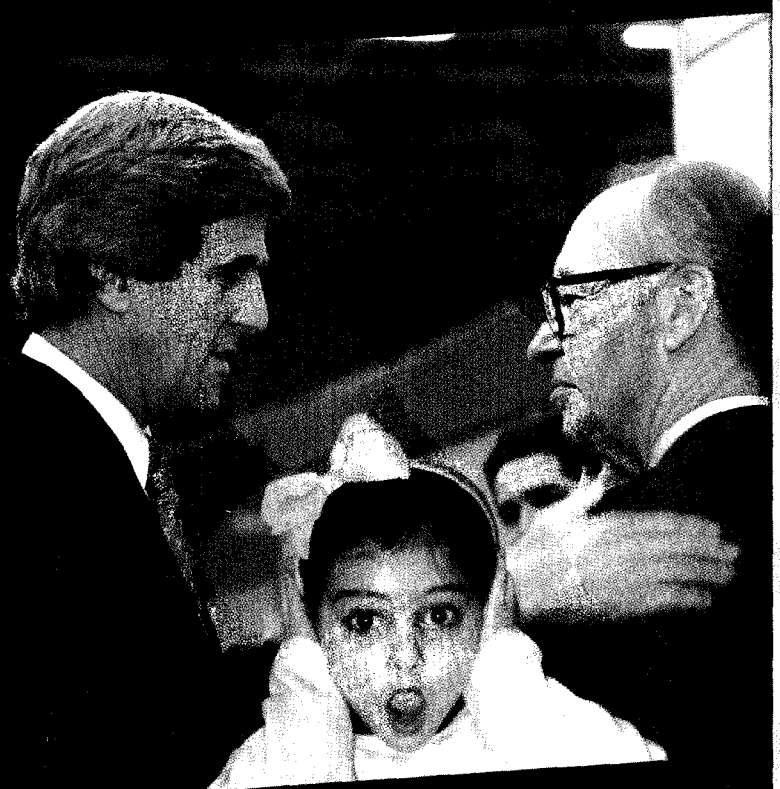
RS: Did you feel you were blindsided by Dean's success?

KERRY: Well, not blindsided. I mean, when I voted for the war, I voted for what I thought was best for the country. Did I expect Howard Dean to go off to the left and say, "I'm against everything"? Sure. Did I expect George Bush to f* it up as badly as he did? I don't think anybody did.**

—John Kerry, interviewed in* Rolling Stone, *December 2, 2003



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SEN. KERRY PROMISES 'A CHICKEN IN EVERY F***ING POT'

BUSH PRESCRIPTION PLAN SAID TO 'BLOW'

Ass of Dean Is Grass, Candidate Predicts

BY BERNDT SCHEIDT

UPPER CREEK, N.H. — Envisioning an end to "deficits up the frickin' ying-yang," Massachusetts senator John "F." Kerry told a New Hampshire crowd that under his administration, "you'll see a chicken in every f***ing pot." The campaign hopes voters will be energized by the speech, made in front of the Amalgamated Brotherhood of Southwestern New Hampshire Junior Varsity Football Coaches, a pillar of the senator's union strategy in the Granite State.

"Increasingly," said Mary Beth Cahill, Kerry's newly hired campaign manager, "Americans are tuning in and seeing a campaign that really has its s*** together." Still other staffers—among them, many who had voiced misgivings about the candidate's seeming early indecisiveness—viewed Sen. Kerry as now "getting his ass in gear."

While the "chicken in every f***ing pot" image has been criticized as outdated rhetoric, pollsters have found that it resonates with an anxious public. In a new poll conducted by the Brookings Institution in early December, 61 percent of New Hampshire voters described their reaction to the use of the phrase as "positive," and 23 percent were "negative," with 16 percent inquiring how the f*** should they

(See PRIMARY, p. A6)

European Chic

WASHINGTON, October
President Bush met today wi
from European powers that
calls last spring to join th

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Smaller Target, Better Job

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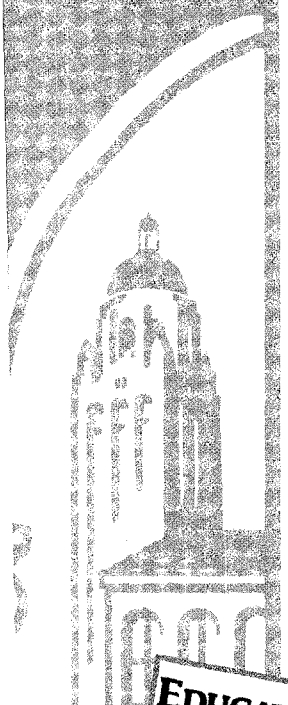


In many cities the job of school superintendent offers all the satisfactions of the town spear catcher. Able people often leave the job pierced in soul if not in body. Cities such as Seattle and Portland can get qualified men and women to apply for the job but can't keep applicants interested long enough to hire anyone.

A few hardy souls, such as Boston's Tom Payzant and San Diego's Alan Bersin, hang in there. But most superintendents either quit in frustration or are fired when school boards that can't settle on anything else agree that the superintendent is no good.

Superintendents are not all equally well prepared or skillful, but the problem is more with the job than with the people. School superintendents are expected to keep everyone happy, even such groups as parents of gifted and disadvantaged children who are in a zero-sum competition for money. They are supposed to maintain a warm, fuzzy relationship with teachers whose unions are constantly undercutting reform efforts and grabbing any new money that becomes available for salaries and smaller class sizes. They are supposed to get results out of a district central office, many of whose staff members are tenured lifers or have their own power bases in local churches, neighborhoods, and political clubs.

Superintendents are ultimately fired or driven to distraction by school boards, which do a wonderful job of representing all the conflicts and confusions that exist in their communities. It's hard to see how school boards as constituted can do anything else: they too face fractured communities and incompatible demands. But unlike the superintendent they have somebody on whom they can take out their frustrations

Education insiders keep searching for a mutant strain of individuals who can succeed under these circumstances. But the real problem is with the jobs themselves, both of superintendent and of school board member.

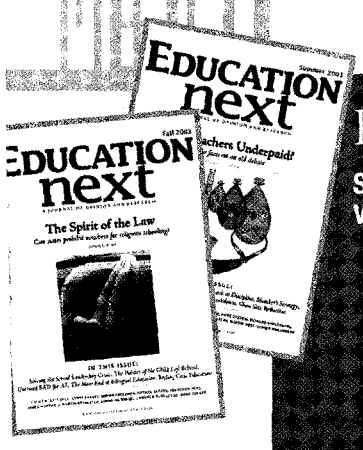
These jobs are setups. Superintendents and school board members are expected to take responsibility for things that they can't influence because state and federal regulations and collective bargaining agreements stand in the way. The scope of the superintendents' nominal powers—hiring all the teachers, spending all the money, choosing all the books, managing all the buses—is so great that every kind of conflict or grievance comes straight to them.

The key to making superintendent and school board jobs doable is to refine the excessive powers and duties to the few that matter, such as focusing on charter schools rather than hiring teachers, holding schools accountable for children's learning instead of dealing with grievances, sending dollars to the schools that parents choose in place of fiddling with centrally administered budgets, withdrawing support from schools that do not teach effectively, developing new schools to replace failed ones, and letting parents choose among schools rather than trying to make the best of a bad family-school match.

Superintendents and school boards can trade in grandiose roles for simpler but more consequential ones and catch a lot fewer spears in the bargain.

— Paul T. Hill

Paid for by the Hoover Institution, Stanford University.



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